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Abu Dhabi forges strategic partnership with US to accelerate drug discovery and translational research

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To establish a strategic Sanford Burnham Prebys presence within Abu Dhabi's innovation ecosystem



As healthcare systems worldwide seek faster and more effective ways to turn scientific breakthroughs into improved patient outcomes, the Department of Health – Abu Dhabi (DoH), the regulator of the healthcare sector in the Emirate, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, a globally renowned biomedical research institute based in San Diego, California, to establish a drug discovery and translational science collaboration that combines world-class scientific expertise with Abu Dhabi's living lab, accelerating the path from discovery to real-world impact.

Signed during the Abu Dhabi Healthcare and Life Sciences delegation’s strategic visit to the United States, by Dr Noura Khamis Al Ghaithi, Undersecretary of the Department of Health – Abu Dhabi and David A. Brenner, MD, president and CEO of Sanford Burnham Prebys, the collaboration aligns Sanford Burnham Prebys' therapeutics discovery capabilities with Abu Dhabi's clinical, genomic and biobanking assets, creating new opportunities to accelerate the development of first-in-class therapeutics from early target identification through translational validation and preclinical development.

The agreement will explore collaborative development pathways to accelerate the translation and commercialisation of promising therapies. Both parties will work to advance prioritised therapeutic candidates into clinical development, leveraging Abu Dhabi's population-scale genomics programmes, longitudinal health data, research infrastructure and diverse patient population to support first-in-human and early-phase clinical studies.

Beyond research and therapeutic development, the partnership will support talent and workforce capacity building through joint training initiatives, researcher exchange programmes and scientific collaboration opportunities with Sanford Burnham Prebys' Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. These efforts will contribute to strengthening Abu Dhabi's growing pipeline of health and life sciences talent while supporting the Emirate's long-term innovation agenda.