

GHIT fund names ten new partners to advance R&D for neglected diseases

June 7, 2016 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

GHIT fund names ten new partners to advance R&D for neglected diseases



The Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund) has announced ten new funding partnerships that include major global pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies and collaborations that will expand investments into research and development (R&D) for neglected diseases worldwide, many of which have already begun to show progress in clinical trials.

The new collaborations include a full funding partnership with Fujifilm Corporation, an associate partnership with Otsuka Pharmaceutical, affiliate partnerships with GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Kyowa Hakko Kirin, Merck, Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma Corporation, Nipro Corporation, Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma, and a sponsorship from Salesforce.com.

The GHIT Fund is a public-private partnership between the Japanese government, multiple pharmaceutical companies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust, and UNDP. Launched in April 2013 with an initial commitment of more than \$100 million and now with capital of approximately \$140 million, the organization taps Japanese research and development (R&D) to fight neglected diseases.

GHIT invests and manages a portfolio of development partnerships aimed at neglected diseases that afflict the world's poorest people. GHIT mobilizes Japanese pharmaceutical companies and academic and research organizations to engage in the effort to get new medicines, vaccines, and diagnostic tools to people who need them most, with Japan quickly becoming a game-changer in global health.

"We are excited to welcome these new funding partners from within Japan and across the globe, who have joined forces with the GHIT Fund because of their own unique commitments to global health, as well as their confidence that working together will transform R&D," GHIT Fund CEO Dr B T Slingsby said. "The partnerships will not only broaden our scope, but also increase our ability to reach the world's most vulnerable people with lifesaving technology."

GHIT's announcement also marks its third year investing in R&D for neglected diseases, having now allocated more than \$60 million into upwards of 60 collaborations for product development. Of these investments, 23 have resulted in partnerships to screen Japan's unique compound libraries, resulting in 18 potential drug candidates. GHIT grants in 2015 alone have also led to five projects advancing into its innovative hit-to-lead platform (HTLP), as well as four novel candidates entering clinical trials for the first time--two in Phase I (first-in-human) and two in Phase II (including one proof-of-concept).

These new partnerships, along with GHIT's existing ones, will enable the organization to continue investing in new, innovative technology for neglected diseases, as well as promising candidates that have recently entered clinical trials, or will eventually enter late-stage trials.

Since its founding three years ago, GHIT has built a robust portfolio of drugs, vaccines and diagnostics, which tap into Japan's cutting-edge science and technology platforms for global health. Today, several potentially game-changing candidates have entered clinical trials and others are moving steadily through the pipeline--many of which could someday save millions of lives.

"With these new partnerships, in addition to last month's pledge from the Government of Japan to contribute \$130 million to GHIT's/UNDP's replenishment, recent progress has the potential to accelerate these tools even faster into the hands of the doctors, nurses and patients who need them most," said Dr Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Chair of the Board at GHIT. "We'll be working with our partners from industry, the Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust to realize our full replenishment, and with that, our opportunities to change the face of R&D for global health are boundless."