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Mitsubishi Research Institute and Astellas collaborate to support pharma startups in Japan

June 13, 2025 | News

Accelerating the growth of globally active drug-discovery startups from Japan



Mitsubishi Research Institute, Inc. and Astellas Pharma Inc. have agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide drug-discovery startups in Japan with support in their efforts to go global. The pair aims to strengthen Japan's position as a global hub for drug discovery and foster the growth of its startups that can thrive globally.

The new support represents multiple programmes under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's Medical Innovation Support Office (MEDISO), which looks to address the lack of practical application of Japan's advanced life-sciences technologies.

Mitsubishi Research Institute has been entrusted to operate MEDISO since 2018 and has been helping promising drug-discovery startups commercialize their intellectual property since.

The new partnership looks to leverage the strengths of both companies. MRI will draw from its previous MEDISO work, supporting over twelve hundred startup and academic ventures, and design specific support programs for participants.

Astellas Pharma will provide drug-discovery startups participating in the acceleration program conducted through MEDISO with access to laboratory and office space at SakuLab-Tsukuba, located on the premises of the Astellas Tsukuba Research Center. Startups residing in SakuLab-Tsukuba will not only receive support through consultations with Astellas experts in various fields, but will also be able to accelerate their drug discovery research by leveraging networks with fellow residents and Astellas researchers.

The new support will provide Japanese drug-discovery startups with early access to pharmaceutical-industry insights, enabling them to chart a path toward successful global development and potential out-licensing. This aligns with the *Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2024*, which aims to improve domestic research and development environments while encouraging the participation of global pharmaceutical companies and venture capitalists in building a robust drug discovery ecosystem.

Moving forward, MEDISO as a whole aims to collaborate with domestic and international business partners to support the global expansion of Japanese drug- discovery startups while encouraging global investors to invest in Japan's burgeoning drug discovery field.