

Thailand's Life Sciences Push Gains Business Momentum

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Thailand, emerging as a life sciences hub, fueled by biotech startups, multinational investment, and government-backed research in vaccines, genomics, and regenerative medicine, is positioning itself as ASEAN's leading center for healthcare innovation.



Over the past few years, it has become evident that Thailand is undergoing a significant transformation into a hub of life sciences innovation. With a population of 67 million and positioned as the second-largest economy in ASEAN, the market has become of relevance in the sector. Biotech startups have multiplied, multinationals scout new investment opportunities, and government programmes push research into fields such as vaccines, genomics, and regenerative medicine. Many hospitals in Bangkok are also drawing more international patients. Still, Thailand wants to go further and position itself as a hub where breakthrough therapies can be developed, tested, and delivered at scale.

This ambition is backed by policy. Thailand 4.0 identifies biotechnology as a priority growth sector, while the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) hosts innovation hubs and high-value manufacturing facilities. Investment incentives, including tax breaks and R&D support, underscore the government's commitment.

Demographics make this even more urgent. Thailand already has over 12 million citizens aged 60 or older - around 20 per cent of its population. By 2050, this could reach 36 per cent, making Thailand one of Asia's most aged societies. Combined with the rising burden of non-communicable diseases, demand for advanced therapies and equitable access will grow.

Strategic partnerships elevate businesses

However, in my experience, turning this potential into practice is challenging. Regulations differ by product category, and while urban areas such as Bangkok have strong distribution networks, secondary cities face more fragmented access. These factors can delay innovation from reaching patients. That is where strategic partnerships play a pivotal role. I have seen how collaborations allow companies to tap into existing infrastructure instead of trying to build everything from scratch, reducing cost, time, and risk. They also create opportunities to navigate regulatory frameworks with greater precision, as local partners bring established knowledge and working relationships with authorities.

A recent example illustrates this well. DKSH Healthcare partnered with a European biotech firm specialising in advanced oncology treatments. Rather than attempting to establish its own regulatory and distribution network, the biotech firm leveraged DKSH's integrated services. The result was faster registration, streamlined logistics across Thailand's provinces, and access to key hospital groups within months. Patients benefited from that as the collaboration led to earlier availability of these cutting-edge therapies.

Equally important, partnerships foster collaboration between stakeholders. Personally, I have seen pharmaceutical innovators team up with local distributors, universities, and government agencies to align clinical trials with population needs. Likewise, medical device firms partner with hospitals to adapt product design based on real-world patient feedback, driving better adoption.

Moreover, effective partnerships are about more than contracts. In Thailand, business relationships often rely on credibility and long-term engagement. These softer factors determine success. Companies that invest in building genuine connections with their partners are more likely to navigate setbacks and regulatory shifts without losing momentum.

Looking ahead, the demand for healthcare innovation in Thailand will continue to rise. We are facing an ageing population, rising non-communicable diseases, and increasing expectations for digital health solutions. Meeting these demands will require both capital and expertise which many organisations cannot provide alone. Strategic partnerships are therefore becoming less of an option and more of a necessity.

From my perspective, by working all together and sharing the same vision, we can transform policy ambition into real-world impact: giving patients earlier access to advanced treatments and creating a life sciences ecosystem strong enough to sustain growth for decades to come.

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