

GSK to Double China R&D Staff



Dr. Jingwu Zang is leading GSK's new R&D enterprise in Shanghai.

Pharmaceutical GlaxoSmithKline recently announced that it will expand its China-based research and development staff to 350 people in the next few years, first reported by Reuters. With a total of 170 employees at present, GSK aims to increase to 200 by the end of this year, and finally to recruit up to 350 staff in its R&D sector in Shanghai. In addition, GSK plans to expand its facilities as well. The news of expansion was released shortly after GSK announced a 2 percent cut of its global R&D force in US, UK, and Italy in June this year. Still, the number falls short of the projected 1000 staff members in Shanghai R&D center made by GSK in December 2007.

The Shanghai R&D center, which was formed last year, focuses on neurodegenerative diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease. Current projects include development of an extended-release version of ReQuip (ropinirole) for Parkinson's disease treatment, and phase III studies of diabetes treatment with Avandia (rosiglitazone) for Alzheimer's patients. The Shanghai center was tasked with eventually directing GSK's R&D activities in this therapeutic area, coordinating with other GSK centers around the world and research institutions.

China CRO Further Ventures into US Market

Venturepharm Laboratories Ltd. (VPL), a Beijing-based Chinese pharmaceutical company, purchased majority shares of the US medicine group CBI (Commonwealth Biotechnologies, Inc., CBTE) in April 2008. CBI, operated through four multinational companies, offers research and development services to the global life sciences industry. According to the companies, CBI will provide early-stage drug discovery technologies, marketing and business development to the joint venture, while Venturepharm will provide manufacturing and clinical trial services.

The two companies plan to jointly build a research center in China, leveraging China's low-cost operational environment. This new establishment will also allow CBI to channel its Research and Development (R&D) center to China to reduce CBI's R&D costs.

The deal represented the first time that a Chinese enterprise has purchased a Nasdaq-listed drug company.

