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ASIA EDITION

"Testing for new COVID-19 cases will now be a regular aspect of life in Singapore"

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In conversation with Abel Ang, the Group Chief Executive of Advanced MedTech (AMTH, a Singapore-based medical device leader wholly-owned by Temasek Holdings)



Advanced MedTech Holdings (AMTH), a global medical technology leader, has co-founded a Singapore-based venture, AbAsia Biolabs, with Professor Sir David Lane, former Chief Scientist at A*STAR and his wife Professor Birgit Lane, former Executive Director at the Institute of Medical Biology (IMB) and Skin Research Institute of Singapore (SRIS).

AMTH has co-founded AbAsia Biolabs to manufacture and ensure a consistent local supply of diagnostic kit reagents and solutions. Amidst the rapidly growing demands for COVID-19 in-vitro diagnostic kits and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test kits, the initiative aims to support the government's needs at routine and large-scale testing.

To provide an insured and secured model to Singapore's COVID-19 screening reagent supply chain, and to avoid possible supply disruption, AbAsia will assist Singapore in rapid/massive testing for a speedy reopening of the economy. In a recent conversation with *Biospectrum Asia,* **Group Chief Executive of Advanced MedTech, *Abel Ang***, shared more insights on AMTH's venture towards increasing accessibility of COVID-19 tests with a reinforced supply chain.

- **Can you elaborate on Singapore's current COVID-19 testing and manufacturing capabilities and how prepared the country is to manage the virus long-term.**

Testing for new COVID-19 cases will now be a regular aspect of life in Singapore, and the country has implemented mechanisms to adapt and meet this heightened demand.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020, Singapore has ramped up its PCR testing capacity from a few thousand tests per day to 60,000-70,000 tests per day.

Singapore's Prime Minister has talked about routinely and regularly testing people who appear well, in normal work or social or community settings, to make these places safe. With an extensive manufacturing capacity that allows Advanced MedTech to produce several million Resolute2.0 kits a month, we will be able to do our part to support the government in its efforts to keep the country safe.

- **How significant is improving local diagnostic reagent production and supply chain to overcome international disruptions during prime conditions?**

Last year, the sudden escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic hit our global supply chains hard and exposed inherent weaknesses. We witnessed vulnerabilities in production strategies and supply chains. Temporary trade restrictions and shortages of food, pharmaceuticals, critical medical supplies, and other products further accentuated these weaknesses.

Reagents were in short supply as manufacturers couldn't keep up with the surges in demand, and this hampered the development and manufacturing of critical COVID-19 test kits.

Localizing reagent production boosts Singapore's supply chain resilience. AbAsia can produce and supply reagents that are used in COVID-19 test kits, allowing us to mitigate any risks associated with global supply chain setbacks - while gearing up to meet Singapore's demand for increased testing. At the same time, AbAsia continues research in other areas of biotechnology and cancer, and is poised to be the premier platform to develop and showcase local technology and reagents in Asia.

- **How is AMTH contributing to the fight against the pandemic through its other initiatives – manufacturing of the RESOLUTE COVID-19 test kit and the telehealth Alpha ventilator for ICU patients?**

Advanced MedTech is the largest medical device manufacturer in Southeast Asia, and we are Singapore headquartered with both manufacturing and R&D facilities.

We saw the need to support Singapore's efforts to expand its nationwide testing capabilities significantly last year when COVID-19 cases were on the rise. To meet this demand, we set up one of the country's largest automated in-vitro diagnostics facilities in just six weeks, which allowed us to ramp up capacity to produce 3 million tests per month.

In addition, we also invested $10 million with SEEDS Capital in ABM Respiratory Care, a medical device company developing novel integrated airway clearance and ventilation solutions.

The funds went towards accelerating the global commercialization of the Alpha, the world's first telehealth ventilator that allows healthcare providers to remotely control breathing for patients with severe respiratory distress. The treatment information transmitted to caregivers in real-time. The ventilator allows smaller healthcare teams to remotely monitor and adjust the settings of patients and reduce the risk of infection by reducing the number of bedside visits, conserving PPE usage.

We also initiated the Billion Breath Project, aimed at supporting healthcare workers against COVID-19. As part of this CSR outreach, we have distributed almost $2 million worth of ventilators to hospitals in pandemic hotspots across Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines and India.

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