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Exploring Synergies: How Biotech Companies and Startups Can Drive Breakthrough Therapies

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Amgen & NSG Biolabs drives bioscience innovation while encouraging greater synergy in Singapore's biotech industry; VerImmune wins second Golden Ticket



Leading global biotechnology company Amgen and NSG BioLabs, Singapore's largest provider of biotech co-working laboratories and co-working space, announced VerImmune as the second winner of the Amgen Golden Ticket in Singapore. The Golden Ticket Programme is part of both companies' continuous efforts to accelerate the growth of innovative biotech startups and to foster greater collaboration within Singapore's biotech sector as a leading regional biotech and pharma hub.

Amgen called for greater collaboration and multi-sectoral efforts between major biotech companies and the startup community to drive innovation and advance pipeline assets to improve patient outcomes in the region.

Accelerating innovation by encouraging synergy between biotech companies and startups:

Increasing aging population in Asia-Pacific and the advent of a range of chronic diseases are changing the healthcare industry and patients' priorities. MedTech, pharma and biotech firms in Singapore are leading the fight against urgent healthcare concerns, tapping into its strong R&D and manufacturing capabilities.

Guest of Honour Soh Leng Wan, Assistant Chief Executive Officer (Manufacturing & Engineering) of Enterprise Singapore (EnterpriseSG) shared that a strong science base, financing and mentorship support, paired with conducive launchpads such as NSG BioLabs, form the foundation of Singapore's biotech ecosystem.

"To amplify national efforts to spur biotech innovation and growth, EnterpriseSG will intensify its efforts to support industry players in driving more such strategic collaborations," he added.

Dignitaries highlighted how a synergistic partnership would offer aspiring startups external validation for the technologies they are developing, and how it would help build and sustain a viable biotech talent pool in Singapore.

Arleen Paulino, Senior Vice President, Manufacturing at Amgen explained “Beyond helping startups weather difficult times, this synergistic partnership encourages diversity in ideas and approaches to therapies”.

“Based on our various experiences and backgrounds, both startups and major biotech firms can tap into more scientific breakthroughs. These collaborations can serve as an accelerator for therapies to be made available to patients faster and help advance new ideas to address current healthcare trends and needs in the region,” she added.

Recognizing and fostering exemplary biotherapeutic start-up:

VerImmune, a biotechnology company developing a novel first-in-class cancer therapy known as Anti-tumor Immune Redirection (AIR) secured second Amgen X NSG Golden Ticket (2023). VerImmune is developing AIR, a breakthrough therapy that redirects immune memory against pathogens or childhood vaccines to target cancer. VerImmune strives to enhance its capability to develop innovative platform technology that can treat multiple diseases.

VerImmune’s highly innovative Virus-inspired Particle (ViP™) platform technology bears great potential to treat multiple diseases. The ViP technology has shown great promise in the field of oncology, pioneering a first-in-class cancer immunotherapy approach known as Anti-tumor Immune Redirection (AIR). To combat cancer, this process uses immune memory from past infections or childhood vaccinations. VerImmune is currently looking to explore the use of ViP technology in other areas of unmet medical needs.

A team of Amgen scientific experts evaluated the finalists to choose the winner. Amgen’s internal scientific committee reviewed business plans to assess the strength and novelty of the participants’ scientific rationale, subject matter expertise and business plan viability.

“Amgen believes and supports innovation and science that will ultimately benefit patients, independent of where the seed of the idea takes root. We are collaborating with VerImmune to harness the potential of their technology and advance novel biotherapeutics. Our vision to bring therapeutics to patients with grievous diseases requires that we do everything we can to help the youngest of companies take root and grow quickly,” said Dr. Alan Russell, Vice President, Biologics Therapeutic Discovery, Amgen.

Expressing his gratitude for receiving the Golden Ticket from the Amgen-NSG BioLabs committee, Joshua Wang, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of VerImmune said, “we aim to strengthen our local presence and demonstrate the potential diverse therapeutic applications of our innovative ViP platform in combating diseases worldwide”.

VerImmune has been awarded a one-year free residency in NSG Biolabs’ fully equipped, turnkey and certified BSL-2 laboratory, as well as additional facility benefits and access to Amgen’s vast network of scientific and business leaders, which VerImmune can now leverage to execute its scientific goals towards biotherapeutics. Amgen’s Golden Ticket sponsorship marks the second of the NSG Tomorrow Program created to help innovative biotech startups execute towards their vision.

As a leading biomedical hub in Asia, Singapore is the location of choice for many companies to develop and produce new products that better meet Asia’s healthcare needs. Singapore’s deep base of skilled talent, strong manufacturing capabilities and thriving research ecosystem have drawn pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms to set up here to serve patients from around the globe and connect with the growing Asian market. Singapore’s biotech ecosystem has since grown to more than 60 pharmaceutical manufacturing plants with over 400 biomedical startups.

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