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Merck announces two strategic collaborations to strengthen AI-driven drug discovery

September 20, 2023 | News

Partnerships with BenevolentAI and Exscientia to drive accelerated drug discovery with higher probability of success



Merck, a leading science and technology company, has announced two new strategic drug discovery collaborations aimed at harnessing powerful artificial intelligence (AI)-driven design and discovery capabilities, further advancing the company's research efforts. The partnerships, with BenevolentAI, London, U.K., and Exscientia, Oxford, U.K., are expected to generate several novel clinical development drug candidates with first-in-class and best-in-class potential in key therapeutic areas of oncology, neurology and immunology.

Under the terms of the agreements, three potential first-in-class and best-in-class targets have been selected to initiate each partnership with the possibility of identifying and nominating additional targets in the future. The collaborative efforts are focused on advancing small molecule development candidates which Merck will select for further pre-clinical and clinical development. Both partners will each receive low double digit million US dollar upfront payments and will be eligible for discovery, development, regulatory and commercial milestone payments and tiered royalties based on net sales.

Merck systematically explores data science and AI approaches to accelerate the discovery and delivery of breakthrough medicines. Integrating AI across R&D processes from identifying targets to clinical trials and product lifecycle management, is aimed at transforming drug discovery and development, bringing new medicines to patients faster and with higher probability of success. As the field evolves Merck will continue to deepen its existing AI and advanced analytics expertise while expanding partnerships and collaborations, ensuring the company remains at the forefront of innovation.