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ASIA EDITION

Defining the definitive split between Asian and Western approaches towards the healthcare industry

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Jackson Su, Director of Business Development, Business Unit Healthcare, DKSH Asia's latent potential as a growth market with the uptick in public and private sector investment in the healthcare space reinforces the importance of access to innovative medicines in Asia



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JP Morgan hosted the 43rd Annual Healthcare Conference in San Francisco, CA between January 13-16, 2025. The prestigious event brought together global industry leaders, emerging fast-growth companies, and innovative technology pioneers to present at the premier and foremost conference for the healthcare sector. Distinguished international healthcare industry leaders exchanged ideas on breakthroughs and emerging trends in the healthcare industry. A key objective of the forum was to explore strategies for increasing access to these advancements globally, particularly in developing countries outside of the United States. The conference explored the latest developments in biopharma, biotech, pharmaceuticals and beyond, making it an ideal platform for discovering cutting-edge innovations.

DKSH, a prominent player in the healthcare industry, outlined an overview of these advancements at the conference, underscoring Asia's potential in global healthcare. **Jackson Su, Director of Business Development, Business Unit Healthcare, DKSH,** provided commentary addressing the challenges and opportunities of global healthcare advancement highlighted at the conference. In a conversation with Biospectrum, Jackson Su elaborates on the kinetics of industry growth by identifying the industry dynamics driving the enterprises, innovations, and start-ups capitalizing on these trends.

- **What is your perception of Asia's position in global healthcare and bioscience innovations? How did the JP Morgan Healthcare Symposium influence your outlook on global healthcare trends and opportunities?**

In terms of healthcare and innovation, Asia is leading in specific areas of treatment, especially those relevant and impactful to the regional population. A good example of this would be oncology related to lung cancer, which is the most common cancer in the region. However, from an industry standpoint, the US remains the largest healthcare market and is the center for breakthroughs and innovations. As such, advancements are typically adopted in the US first before reaching the rest of the world through a phased approach.

Attending events like the JP Morgan Healthcare Symposium allowed us to deepen our insight on movements in the healthcare space and expand our outlook to the global level. A trend we observed was on how there is a definitive split in how healthcare is being approached. On one end we have large well-established healthcare entities, who leverage their size and resources to improve and push their existing pipelines. They do this through incremental improvements to their current treatments and existing platforms. On the other side there are smaller firms that target niches and focus on innovations, especially in sectors such as biotech and rare diseases.

While still leading in specific areas in global healthcare innovation, Asia still reflects many of the wider industry trends observed at the symposium. The split approach to healthcare we observed presents an opportunity for Asia. The region has latent potential as a growth market , especially with the uptick in public and private sector investment in the healthcare space. Collectively, this reinforces the importance of access to innovative medicines in Asia and the role that companies like DKSH can play in streamlining the process.

- **At the JPM2025 conference, what innovations or developments in healthcare and biotechnology were highlighted? How do you anticipate the key takeaways from the symposium to impact industry dynamics in Asia?**

The symposium was host to many healthcare developments worth highlighting. Tech-focused advancements were showcased thoroughly in the event, such as AI tool integration seen with ConcertAI, NVIDIA and Waystar. Another heavily featured topic was the innovative research with examples like Sling Therapeutics and Biohaven releasing promising data for medical trials. Gene-therapy was also a highlight with companies like CRISPR and Vertex making new strides in treatment options. The latter was a personal standout, with their work done to address late-stage type-1 diabetes through gene editing. Furnishing these highlights was additional news on partnerships and funding. This was especially evident in areas requiring a lot of resources and expertise such as gene therapies and gene sequencing seen with entities like Regenxbio and Regeneron.

The key takeaways from the symposium are indicative of upcoming medical breakthroughs, which will shake up healthcare industry dynamics in Asia and across the globe. For example, Asia’s evident risk of diabetes , and its subsequent approach to it, is likely to see significant shifts once solutions such as the gene editing by Vertex becomes widely available. It is prudent that healthcare providers in Asia keep their fingers on the pulse of these latest advancements emerging in the western world. Further collaboration and partnerships should be explored to ensure that these developments find their way into healthcare ecosystems in Asia.

- **By leveraging globalisation trends, how will Asia's medical and biotech arena be shaped? How can enterprises, innovators, SME's and start-ups capitalise on these trends?**

Many significant advancements and movements made in the global healthcare sector still primarily come from the US medical market. These shifts will ultimately reach and shape the Asian medical and biotech arenas. However, it is still evident that the majority of these firms often consider European expansion ahead of Asia, likely due to perceived proximity and localization challenges, despite the vast Asian population. These perceptions should shift in order for Asia’s healthcare ecosystem to be enhanced by the developments being made in the west.

Larger healthcare firms as well as SMEs and start-ups can capitalize on Asia’s growing globalization in the healthcare space. Asia as a whole is rapidly advancing in its approach to healthcare, especially when it comes to globalizing and attracting foreign firms. In its recent white paper DKSH in collaboration with FrontierViewshowcased that many countries within less developed areas in Southeast Asia were ramping up investment into healthcare. Multiple avenues are currently being explored for this. One such example is medical tourism, as seen in efforts such as Indonesia’s creation of special zones in

Bali and Batam. Public-private-partnerships (PPPs) are another example being explored, particularly to fill in the public healthcare gaps for many of these nations. Standardized regulation is also being addressed. This is to ensure that medications can enter the regional market without facing the headache of navigating multiple variations. With the litany of advancements being made, Asia will continue to become increasingly attractive as a location to expand for firms pushing medical boundaries.

- **What are the key factors driving innovation and market dynamics in biopharma, biotech, and pharma, as identified at JPM2025 ? Can you summarize the insights gained from the experts and your own viewpoint?**

The key driving factor for both innovation and market dynamics lies in the resource capability of the healthcare firms across the industry. Larger healthcare firms have amassed resources that allow them to tackle general widespread health issues. This is done through collaboration with the public sector while these firms continue to push their existing health solutions and platforms. This has left a gap of niche targets for smaller firms to fill and aim for. Addressing niche health issues such as rare diseases is commonplace for these smaller firms. This paves the way for innovative approaches that could eventually drive the wider market dynamics.

The insights gained from the symposium highlighted the continued importance that emerging technologies can have when applied in the healthcare sector. The rise of AI across the global landscape is testament to this. It is promising to see the current use-cases of AI and I am excited to see the possibilities this technology can unlock for healthcare. Additionally, witnessing data and results from the ongoing advancements in treatments reinforced the constant work being done to treat and find solutions for medical issues. Ultimately, the insights gained from the symposium gave an encouraging view of the healthcare sector. However, it also highlighted the need and potential urgency in bringing these advancements to the global patient-base.

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