

Japan's top 5 bio firms fund \$100 mn HIV, TB research

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Singapore: Japan's top pharma companies, including Astellas, Eisai, Daiichi Sankyo, Shionogi, and Takeda, have come together to initiate an effort worth \$100 million to tackle HIV, malaria, tuberculosis and tropical diseases, which have been afflicting the poor in the world's emerging markets.

These companies will contribute \$5 million each over five years to fund a lineup of research grants, with added cash being chipped in by the Japanese government, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Although, firms like GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) have earlier helped spearhead similar efforts in Europe, Japan's pharma companies are seen to have maintained a sharp focus on their home market, the US and new markets that promise fast sales growth. However, they have agreed to open up their libraries of drug compounds to help find new therapies while collaborating on the lab effort required, according to a report from the *Financial Times*.

Global Health Innovative Technology (GHIT) Fund executive director, Mr BT Slingsby, said that the grants will range from \$50,000 and would go into millions. They will also be open to investigators who are willing to support the move to develop affordable therapies for poor countries.