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AB SCIEX to leverage on opportunities with CROs

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AB SCIEX, a global leader in life science analytical technologies, recently opened its new Asia Pacific Application and Training Centre. Located in Singapore's biomedical hub at Biopolis, this center provides comprehensive service, support and application development to enable the scientific community in Singapore and the rest of ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea to increase use of mass spectrometry (MS) technologies for a broad range of applications. The new Singapore facility complements the regional application support center that AB SCIEX opened last year in Shanghai, China.

Also, AB SCIEX has broadened its chromatography solutions portfolio with new ultra-high performance liquid chromatography (UHPLC) solutions. This expansion includes the introduction of the Eksigent ekspert ultraLC 100 and 100-XL systems, which are analytical flow LC systems that enhance AB SCIEX's complete LC/MS/MS workflow solutions. The new Eksigent ekspertTM ultraLC 100 and 100-XL systems are designed for a wide range of scientists, including food safety, clinical research and forensic scientists, who need a total workflow solution for high-throughput UHPLC-MS/MS analysis of residues, impurities, drugs and other analytes in complex matrices.

In an interview with *BioSpectrum*, Mr Johnson Ho, vice president- APAC sales, AB SCIEX, shares his views on the Asian market and the demand for mass spectrometry products.

AB SCIEX recently launched a series of new mass spectrometry technology with the objective to set a new benchmark in the industry. What kind of feedback have you received from the Asian market?

Mr Ho: Our customers in Asia are responding very enthusiastically to the launch of our new AB SCIEX 4500 series of mass spectrometers, Eksigent ekspert ultraLC 100 series and the new Eksigent micro LC 200 system. The feedback we are getting is that our new mass spectrometry and LC systems deliver on our promise of simplifying the adoption of LC/MS/MS across Asia. AB SCIEX is a trusted partner with many important scientific laboratories throughout APAC, and yet we are still at the tip of the huge potential for our LC/MS/MS technology to improve life in Asia-Pacific.

The AB SCIEX technology is central to the drug discovery and development pipeline. From the rapid structural identification and in vitro metabolic stability needs of the early discovery phase to the integrated Qual/Quant and low-level quantitation requirements of the development phase, AB SCIEX offers an innovative set of chromatography, mass spectrometry, software and compliance and validation solutions.

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Also, AB SCIEX is working closely with clinical research laboratories throughout the world to develop applications for fast, sensitive and robust technology. We aim to offer complete solutions for research laboratories combining industry-leading systems, software and pre-configured methods with comprehensive service and support.

Another area where AB SCIEX has been getting strong support from its customers is biomarkers. Biomarkers hold the potential to improve human condition. By providing the basis for earlier and more accurate diagnostic tests, they may help clinicians to detect and treat diseases. And as surrogate end-points they allow pharmaceutical companies to make better and more targeted drugs to treat diseases.

What are the factors that distinguish AB SCIEX from its competitors? What are your strategies?

Mr Ho: What distinguishes us are our integration strategies - integrating quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as developing integrated workflows that provide complete solutions and service for our customers. Our service and support are also best-in-class, giving mass spectrometry users greater confidence than what they will get elsewhere.

Asia is very sensitive towards pricing. What are your pricing strategies for innovative technology?

Mr Ho: We just launched the new Accelerated Lab Integration (ALI) Packages that change the value proposition for laboratories in Asia. This is very significant for price-sensitive customers. AB SCIEX now offers more value-oriented solutions for customers who want a complete LC/MS solution, and want the best. With our new ALI packages, AB SCIEX is now the first choice in value for complete mass spectrometry workflow solutions. It's more than just about list price. It's about an integrated workflow and providing the best value for what customers spend.

What is the contribution of APAC to AB SCIEX's overall revenue and what kind of growth are you looking at in 2012?

Mr Ho: AB SCIEX does not disclose revenue figures by business unit or product line, but the company's pharma and healthcare division continues to make a major impact in APAC. We see opportunities for growth with contract research organizations that are serving medium-to-large pharmaceutical companies in APAC. We are also seeing an increase of pharma work being done in the academia.

What has been the recent trend in Asia regarding the demand of mass spectrometry products?

Mr Ho: Demand for next-generation food safety technologies is growing across APAC. Food safety issues continue and will continue to persist, not just in this region, but around the world. We anticipate that our share in the food testing market will grow in the APAC, especially in China. The benefits of using LC/MS/MS for food safety testing are phenomenal and cannot be ignored. We also see opportunities in clinical research and toxicology.

AB SCIEX currently provides products for research only. We recently announced that we earned 13485 certification, proving that we have the quality management system in place to manufacture medical devices.

AB SCIEX has currently set up its application center in Singapore. Why did you shift out of Japan?

Mr Ho: AB SCIEX still has a customer support lab in Japan, but we have focused resources on a state-of-the-art application support and demo lab in Singapore because of the strategic position of Singapore in Southeast Asia and across APAC. We also have the benefit of having our manufacturing operation based in Singapore, so there is close alignment between our manufacturing and in meeting customer needs in the application support lab.