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Academia, industry team up for Japan's genomic research project

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Singapore: Led by the National Cancer Center of Japan, a joint research pact has been inked by many private companies and academic institutions to discover new drugs based on human genetic data.

The genomic screening project, called Scrum-Japan, involves 13 drugmakers including Takeda Pharmaceutical and Astellas Pharma from Japan and major drugmakers like Pfizer.

The genomes of patients suffering lung, gastrointestinal and other types of cancer are collected for screening, free-of-charge, to identify possible cancer-fighting agents for individual patients. The patients will then be given drugs that incorporate those agents. The project has tested 400 patients so far. By 2017, researchers hope to reach 4,500 people.

According to Dr Koichi Goto of the National Cancer Center, the project will focus on about 150 genes to study their links to the disease. The project is expected to foster Japaneese clinical trials, which would help companies bring new treatments to market.