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MNCs are investing in Asia: Annual BSA CRO Survey

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Market analysis company, BMI Research, reflects that developed countries need to build strategies to maintain the attractiveness of their countries as destinations for clinical trials, especially as the cost of conducting clinical research is forecast to rise.

The research firm indicates that though US and Western Europe are the leading destinations in terms of trial numbers, there is a shift towards conducting trials in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia Pacific.

The shift towards Asia is marked by its high population size, low clinical trial cost and policies to attract CROs. BMI expects a continuing shift in clinical trials moving towards other regions particularly in the case for Phase III trials, as early-stage research is likely to remain in developed states.

Multinational pharmaceutical and clinical research organizations have been active in investing in Asia, opening their local operations in different regions and collaborating with regional CROs to get data access.

Given the high number of ongoing clinical trial in China, Pharmaceutical Product Development, (PPD) opened a central laboratory in Shanghai, China, to deliver global scientific and technical laboratory expertise to meet growing client demand for their services in China. The new facility, established in association with Shanghai Clinical Research Center (SCRC), provides analytical equipment to enable high-quality data across a wide range of technologies and applications for all phases of pharmaceutical development. The Shanghai lab adds to PPD's 20 clinical development facilities throughout the Asia-Pacific region, an area of increased focus for the global CRO.

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Similarly, Quintiles also opened a new headquarters in China, toasting the country's growth as a global biopharma power. Situated in Shanghai's Feng Lin Science Park, Quintiles operation spans at a 43,000-square-foot building that employs about 300 workers with room for 450.

Research and analysis firm, BMI Research, mentions that the growing interest in clinical trials in Asia can be attributed to rising costs in developed countries as according to a study published in British Medical Journal, researchers stated that the average cost of a clinical trial per patient was USD13450 in UK, USD10075 in Spain, USD9968 in Germany and USD8008 in Italy. BMI Research further states that according to American International Clinical Research & Development, the cost of conducting a clinical trial in China is approximately 10-25 percent of the cost of such trials in the US.

At a recent Pharma CI Conference & Exhibition Asia held in Tokyo, Citeline, a research authority on clinical trials reported that clinical trials in East Asia have increased dramatically over a recent 10 year period, driven primarily by local studies. According to the analysis, nearly 65 percent of all clinical trials took place in a single East Asian country, with a high of 78 percent of Japan's initiated studies involving only local sites compared to 55 percent in China. In other countries such as South Korea, the majority of trials initiated were part of a larger multinational study.

Ms Doro Shin, analyst, Citeline highlighted that more Phase 1 trials were conducted in South East Asian countries, in comparison to phase II and phase III trials and the most common therapeutic area is oncology. "When looking at who is conducting the trials, there is a very diverse set of players," commented, Ms Shin, "Large multinational companies such as Novartis and Roche, and local headquartered companies such as Takeda and Otsuka, initiated hundreds of their own trials, however overall there were 617 different companies with an average of only 16 trials each. And for this part of the globe, a surprisingly small number of trials involved collaborations between sponsors."