JAPANESE ENTERPRISE PHARMA COMPANY ENTERS US BY PARTNERING WITH SMARTLABS



COMING TO AMERICA

In 2021, Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma America, Inc. (MTPA) decided to open a research laboratory focused on neuroscience in Boston. The Japanese pharma had a burgeoning amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) research program, kickstarted by its drug Radicava (edaravone), which was approved by the FDA in 2017. Mitsubishi Tanabe chose Boston because it already had collaborations with researchers in the Boston ecocystem.

"The Boston area is really like a condensed ecosystem with many excellent academics, biotech and pharma companies," said Makoto Tamura, Director of NeuroDiscovery Lab, MTPA. "We wanted to open a lab here to accelerate our drug discovery research in the United States."

Additionally, the pharmaceutical company was conducting research using patient-derived samples, which were sourced from one of its collaborators in the United States. "There are numerous biological samples banks and vendors in the U.S. that provide patient samples, which are invaluable for our patient-focused and translational research," explained Tamura.

NAVIGATING REGULATIONS

Once MTPA decided to open a neuroscience research laboratory

in Boston, the company explored many options to resource its science. MTPA considered developing its own operational processes and programs, hiring staff and onboarding vendors, and leasing and designing a custom space. Other options included entering an incubator or lab sharing program. SmartLabs rose to the top of the pharmaceutical company's list for many reasons, said Tamura, including the pharma-grade facilities and services. But the most important reason was SmartLabs' expertise and ability to manage regulatory issues surrounding biomedical research.



Mitsubishi Starts Novel ALS Research in Weeks with SmartLabs



"The top priority for us was to comply with the many regulations, and SmartLabs' support was truly helpful as we embarked on our first endeavor in the U.S.," said Tamura. "Things like environmental health and safety regulations, which are most important to comply with. These regulations are not identical between the U.S. and Japan, and SmartLabs was much better at providing these types of regulatory services than other places we looked at."

Thanks to SmartLabs' comprehensive programs, Tamura was able to quickly begin research. "I was able to start research within two months of arriving in the U.S. I've communicated with other Japanese researchers here in Boston, and they say it took a half-year or so to launch the start of their experiments," said Tamura. programs. When large enterprise pharmaceutical companies want to start up a micro-scale program like MTPA's ALS program, no other company offers the same enterprise capabilities as SmartLabs, and it can be cost prohibitive for pharma companies to build it themselves. MTPA has plans to expand the laboratory's remit to include more rare and common neurological diseases. Tamura's team is small, but he plans to expand the team in the next 12-24 months.

LOOKING TO EXPAND

Being able to focus solely on research – namely looking for new gene targets to treat ALS – paid off quickly for MTPA. "Just one year after starting research in SmartLabs, we found a novel direct target for ALS and filed a patent application for it," said Tamura. Tamura and his team also developed a new method for discovering drug targets in the Boston lab, which they presented in a poster at the Neuroscience 2022 conference in San Diego.

Tamura said that MTPA's progress in ALS research would not have happened so quickly without SmartLabs' research After just one year after starting research in SmartLabs, we found a novel direct target for ALS and filed a patent application for it."

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