

Huya stretches global reach into South Korea via KDDF collaboration

By Cornelia Zou, Staff Writer

HONG KONG – Chinese biopharma company Huya Bioscience International LLC extended its global partnership and commercialization business model to South Korea, looking to replicate the success it has had taking promising compounds from one country – mostly China – and developing them elsewhere.

That South Korean expansion will come through a partnership with the Korean Drug Development Fund (KDDF), a \$1 billion government-backed fund tasked with driving biopharmaceutical development in the country. The agreement allows Huya to form partnerships with local companies and research institutions to accelerate the development and commercialization of novel drugs developed in South Korea.

Huya previously established more than 100 agreements with Chinese universities and research institutes for the licensing of both preclinical- and clinical-stage compounds. By working with the KDDF, it is now adding another leading Asian group into its partnership roster – an institution that gives it access to hundreds of potential drug developers.

“The KDDF is a consortium comprised of three government agencies started with over a billion dollars in funds to support pharmaceutical development in Korea that can lead to the global markets. Their goal is to enhance product development and enterprise within Korea,” Huya CEO Mireille Gillings told *BioWorld Today*. “The KDDF has supported a large number of compounds across multiple therapeutic areas, providing an attractive pool of drug candidates.”

Huya will focus on seeking molecular targeted agents across the major therapeutic areas for the Korean market. Highly innovative drugs that can address significant unmet medical needs see great potential in this market.

“Our criteria [for selecting compounds in Korea] is sound science, best-in-class drugs, and with solid patent life,” said Gillings.

The strength of the Korean pharmaceutical industry is based on “excellent clinical development coupled with a strong regulatory system much like the FDA,” Gillings said. Huya is probably just three or four years away from taking a Korean biopharma product abroad.

Huya has a track record for sourcing China-developed novel biopharmaceutical compounds in worldwide markets. By establishing the partnership with the KDDF, it now has strategic

alliances with all three countries of the Tripartite Cooperation Treaty: China, Japan and South Korea.

“One of Huya’s strengths is leveraging clinical data from one country to advance development in another,” said Gillings. “We did this successfully with our lead product, HBI-8000, taking clinical data from China to the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Agency in Japan. . . . We believe we can be opportunistic across geographies so anything is possible.”

A BRIDGE TO KOREAN PHARMAS

The South Korean government has selected the life sciences sector as a new growth engine and launched numerous initiatives to energize the pharmaceutical industry, including launching the KDDF program in 2011. The KDDF is a government-managed fund with the mission of transforming Korea into the global leader for new drug development.

Korea National Enterprise for Clinical Trials, Korea Research Institute of Bioscience & Biotechnology, Korea Institute of Technology, Korea Research Institute of Chemical Technology and Korea’s two high-tech medical clusters in Osong and Daegu are all involved in the program to support pharmaceutical innovation.

The KDDF currently funds 72 projects: 49 from the pharmaceutical industry, 18 from academia and five from institutes. Those drug developers have 40 drugs at early discovery stages, 12 in preclinical stages and 20 undergoing clinical trials.

However, the fund may support three times the number of projects in the near future. It had already received 266 proposals for innovative drug development projects by mid-2015.

“KDDF supports many R&D pharmaceutical companies in Korea that lack the funds to develop new drugs,” said pharmaceutical analyst Park Jae-Cheol, from Korea’s Mirae Asset, a fund management company. “The recent event of signing the [memorandum of understanding, MOU] with Huya is a form of open innovation similar to big pharma companies sharing the same molecules.

“KDDF works as a bridge for Huya and local Korean

©2015. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THOMSON REUTERS.



pharmaceutical companies,” Park added. “By signing the MOU, it gives the Korean pharmaceutical companies – which have a relatively short history compared to other countries – the possibility of researching and developing compounds from Huya.”

Oncology is the biggest therapeutic area of investment for KDDF, followed by immunology and metabolic disorders. Central nervous system diseases, infectious diseases and cardiovascular diseases are also areas of focus for the Korean fund.

The most advanced drug candidates that the KDDF supports are SK Biopharmaceuticals Co.’s YKP10811 to treat constipation and

YKP3089 to treat epilepsy; Hanmi Pharmaceutical Co.’s next-generation diabetes treatment HM11260C; LG Life Sciences Ltd.’s myocardial infarction agent LC28-0126; Yungjin Pharm Co.’s YPL-001 for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease treatment; and Yuhan Co.’s degenerative disc disease drug, YH14618. Those candidates are well into phase II studies.

“We are expecting that adding more promising drug candidates via the strategic alliance with Huya would deliver substantial performance for Korean pharmaceutical R&D to maximize global licensing-out opportunities and to enter global new drug development arena,” said KDDF’s CEO, Sang-Aun Joo. //