

## Huya in first China JV with Tianjin Institute for drugs, devices

By Shannon Ellis, Staff Writer

SHANGHAI – Huya Bioscience International, with offices in San Diego, Tokyo and eight more across China, has set up its first China joint venture (JV) with the Tianjin Institute of Pharmaceutical Research (TIPR). The new entity is seeking to develop innovative therapeutics as well as medical devices for China and global markets.

“TIPR is a really prestigious renowned institution,” Curtis Tyree, Huya vice president for preclinical science, told *BioWorld Today*. “We saw an opportunity for synergy, effectively that Huya and TIPR in a JV could really accomplish something we couldn’t do without getting together.”

With its extensive knowledge of Chinese research institutions, Huya has had the pick of the litter when deciding with whom to set up a JV. Its business model has been to discover the best science in China, specifically seeking opportunities to license assets.

Having more scouts than all of China’s top five pharmas combined, Huya has an enviably broad network, with more than 100 agreements connecting the firm to the Chinese universities, research institutes, incubators and biotech industrial parks that have sprung up across the country.

Most of those are first-look agreements designed to be beneficial to both parties. Huya gets access and early opportunity to evaluate potential new candidates that may escape the attention of big pharma, and in return it offers feedback on the candidate from a global perspective, along with the possibility of an offer for ex-China development.

“There are a lot of interesting things we can’t license,” Tyree said, “because although they may be terrific for China, there is a competitive, IP or other reason that makes them more challenging globally. We still learn about them and give feedback.”

Huya’s most recent such agreement is with the Changzhou Center for Biotech Development (CZCBD) in Jiangsu province. (See *BioWorld Today*, Aug. 27, 2014.)

Tyree explained Huya’s model is not to act as a broker, licensing candidates to quickly partner out; rather, the firm views its discovery process as one that seeks drugs in China with global promise. The company has licensed three candidates from China, and has taken on the task of replicating and extending the Chinese data in trials conducted in the U.S.

The new JV, to be called TIPR-HUYA Advancing Innovative

Medicines (TIPR-HUYA-AIM), will switch things up and also deepen Huya’s commitment to the China market.

Huya will contribute intellectual resources as will TIPR into the JV, and both sides will have equal voice in product development and commercialization decisions. Another big change for Huya is that the initial goal will be to target drugs for the local China market as opposed to developed markets.

Having just begun, the JV has a relatively open focus and is looking for innovative ideas at a good stage to effectively meet unmet needs in China, as well as the world. TIPR brings its infrastructure and knowledge of the Chinese regulatory system, and Huya offers its international perspective on drug development.

Tyree does not seem concerned that the shiny allure of China’s fast-growing market can be dulled by the frequently trying Chinese regulatory system, with its long wait times and lack of transparency. He is upbeat in his assessment. “The timelines are getting shorter, especially at the IND stage. There have been tremendous efforts to accelerate and modernize the approval processes.”

It also helps that TIPR, established in 1959, is one of the oldest and more prestigious research institutes in China. In 2000, the government designated it a national hi-tech center pegged for innovative drug development, particularly for drugs considered a national priority.

According to Tyree, “they have the ability to do world class pharmaceuticals” and are known for the quality of their medicinal chemistry and formulation technology.

TIPR, a state-owned organization, has the financial backing to take a drug candidate from discovery through clinical trials to market – it has more than 200 new drug certificates for small molecules, Chinese medicines and biologic drugs.

The company made headlines in 2007 when Jiangsu Chia-tai Tianqing Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd. filed a patent infringement against TIPR, one of the first such IP disputes between two domestic companies. The drug in question was a hepatitis B virus medicine, Adefovir dipivoxil, marketed as Hepsera by Gilead Sciences Inc. TIPR won the case and continues to sell the drug in China. //

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