

Saving Lives with Generative AI

Capitalising on Hong Kong's robust I&T landscape, AI and Life Sciences Institute (Hong Kong) aims to tackle new and untreatable diseases using generative AI to accelerate drug discovery.

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Ken Koo
Chief Operating Officer
AI and Life Sciences Institute (Hong Kong)



Hong Kong's life sciences landscape is thriving with innovation and immense potential. With its advanced infrastructure, world-class universities, and a favourable business environment, the city attracts top talent and fosters collaboration between academia, industry, and government. This vibrant innovation and technology (I&T) ecosystem has attracted AI and Life Sciences Institute (Hong Kong) (AILS), which originated in Mainland China, to choose Hong Kong as its headquarters.

AILS, seeded at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and based at the Hong Kong Science and Technology Park (HKSTP), harnesses the synergies between artificial intelligence (AI) and life sciences to accelerate drug discovery. By leveraging state-of-the-art technology, AILSI aims to significantly reduce the time and costs associated with identifying potential compounds in traditional clinical testing. This approach holds great promise for revolutionising the drug development process.

Access to a Vast Market

AILS had ample reasons for making Hong Kong its home. As a gateway to the Asia-Pacific region, the city is an ideal location for pharmaceutical research and development (R&D). Additionally, the city offers a wellspring of highly skilled professionals in fields including bioinformatics, data science and AI.

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opportunities presented by the Asia-Pacific market, forge partnerships, localise our operations, and cater to the specific needs of the region,” said Ken Koo, Chief Operating Officer of AILSI. “The Hong Kong office also plays a crucial role in establishing collaborations with local entities, leveraging regional expertise, and cultivating relationships with key stakeholders. Furthermore, it is responsible for managing intellectual property and regulatory affairs.”

“By leveraging HKSTP's advantages, we can accelerate our R&D, secure funding, access markets, protect our intellectual property, and tap into a strong network of collaborators. These factors contribute to our evolution,” Koo revealed. “We have a strong network connecting resources from theory to clinical trials. Our work could lead to more effective treatments and address previously untreatable conditions.”

BioTech Fundraising Hub

In 2018, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd added Chapter 18A to its main board listing rules, allowing BioTech companies with no revenue or profits to be listed. Since then, Hong Kong has become the preferred listing location for BioTech companies. Koo praises the city as an Asian BioTech fundraising hub. “Hong Kong is a major global financial centre with access to capital markets. We believe the city is an ideal place for us to raise funds through IPOs, venture capital and private equity,” Koo said.

He added, “We plan to join the Incu-Bio Programme offered by HKSTP, and enhance

our business development by joining the Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme (RAISE+).”

With the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiatives placing emphasis on I&T development, Koo is keen to explore what's next. “The Hong Kong government and the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS) signed a memorandum of understanding, confirming that CAS will establish an affiliate institute in Hong Kong with the intent to facilitate its Guangzhou Institute of Biomedicine and Health for launching R&D work. We look forward to more collaboration and knowledge-sharing with GBA experts and professionals,” Koo concluded.

AI and Life Sciences Institute (Hong Kong)

- The company was founded in 2023 by pharmaceutical professionals with hands-on experience in AI drug development
- Headquartered in Hong Kong, AILSI plans to substantially increase its staff count in 2024 as the startup leverages generative AI to accelerate drug discovery

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