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Insilico and A2A launch new Duchenne-focused AI drug company

by [Conor Hale](#) | Jul 20, 2018 4:18pm



Two artificial intelligence-based drug design firms, Insilico Medicine and A2A Pharmaceuticals, have **launched a new joint company** aimed at developing small molecules for Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and other rare orphan diseases.

New York-based A2A will lead the management of the new company, titled Consortium.AI, along with its development work and licensing of the compounds, while Insilico will design new drug candidates and validate therapeutic targets.

Both companies will collaborate on research programs in DMD and other genetic disorders. Baltimore-based Insilico employs adversarial neural networks that compete with each other to produce and optimize candidates. Meanwhile, A2A's computational tools explore complicated targets such as protein-protein interactions, as well as chemical design.

"We are pleased to partner with Insilico Medicine, combining our strengths and complementary technologies to accelerate advancement of better therapeutics into the clinic for the patients that need them," A2A's head of business development, Elena Diez Cecilia, Ph.D., said in a statement.

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A2A **recently** took up residence in Manhattan alongside 25 other life science startups in an incubator run by Johnson & Johnson Innovation and the New York Genome Center.

The JLABS @ NYC project includes a 30,000-square-foot facility providing shared bench space and workstations, as well as access to the global JLABS network of more than 370 incubated companies.

"This new 21st century incubator supports our efforts to boost economic growth by investing in cutting-edge research and technologies that advance human health," said New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. "By investing in JLABS @ NYC, we're connecting early-stage companies with the tools, resources, and networks to succeed while enhancing the life sciences industry and fostering job growth across New York."

"Expanding our JLABS network to NYC will link entrepreneurs around the region with Johnson & Johnson Innovation experts, allowing some of the brightest minds in healthcare to work collaboratively in a shared space," added J&J Chief Scientific Officer Paul Stoffels, M.D.

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Meanwhile, Insilico has been building a global network to power its drug design efforts, including R&D offices and resources in the U.S., Belgium, Russia, the U.K., Taiwan and South Korea.

It recently entered into an agreement with Chinese life sciences giant WuXi AppTec to validate and optimize AI-generated compounds and targets in the laboratory. The deal included an undisclosed venture capital investment by WuXi AppTec in the company—as well as a series of milestones for preclinical candidates aimed at biological targets, including orphan diseases, with no known crystal structure and no known ligands.

"More than 90% of the molecules discovered the traditional techniques and tested in mice fail in human clinical trials," Insilico's founder and CEO, Alex Zhavoronkov, Ph.D., said at the time. "Our goal at Insilico Medicine is to develop advanced end-to-end AI solutions to discover the optimal preclinical candidates."

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