

For Immediate Release

**Hong Kong Genome Institute and AstraZeneca
Exchange Views on Genomic Science and Explore Collaborations to
Accelerate Clinical Trials for the Benefits of Patients**

(Hong Kong, 23 September 2024) The **Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI)** today held an exchange meeting with global biopharmaceutical company **AstraZeneca (AZ)** to discuss the latest technologies in genomic medicine, and advancement in therapeutic research and development (R&D). Guided by the principle of delivering patient benefits, HKGI and AZ agreed to explore potential research collaborations to expedite clinical trials for new pharmaceuticals and therapies. These efforts are expected to foster medical innovations and enhance local healthcare services, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

Chaired by **Dr Lo Su-vui, Chief Executive Officer of HKGI**, the meeting was attended by a delegation of senior representatives and researchers from AZ led by **Dr Slavé Petrovski, Vice President, Centre for Genomics Research, Dr Lifeng Tian, Director, Head of Centre for Genomics Research China, and Dr Xiaoxiao Qian, Senior Director, Head of Strategy, R&D China**. At the invitation of HKGI, representatives from the Health Bureau and the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises of the HKSAR Government were also present.

At the meeting, **Dr Brian Chung, Chief Medical and Scientific Officer of the HKGI**, provided an overview of the background and progress of the Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP). As the territory's first large-scale whole genome sequencing project, HKGP has successfully recruited close to 40,000 participants to date, contributing to the establishment of a genome database predominantly made up of the Southern Chinese population. Dr Chung also introduced various genetics and multi-omics studies initiated by the HKGI team, such as R&D on pharmacogenomics and metabolomics, which have a crucial role to play in identifying the causes of diseases, mapping genetic pathways and developing precision treatments for patients.

For the AZ team, **Dr Slavé Petrovski** presented the conglomerate's vision for advancing genomic medicine and driving company-wide genomics initiatives by leveraging large-scale omics research. **Dr Lifeng Tian** also shared AZ's R&D focus in Hong Kong and the aspiration to catalyse drug discovery through advanced data science, expressing the team's keen interest in forming strategic collaborations with the HKGI at the forefront of multi-omics studies. During the visit, the AZ team also toured HKGI's genomic laboratory, the first in Hong Kong equipped with one-stop whole genome sequencing pipeline that seamlessly covers all complex procedures involved, from sample collection and sequencing to genome curation and report issuance.

Dr Lo Su-vui of the HKGI said, "We are very pleased to have the opportunity to engage with the AZ team on a professional level. Clinical trials play a critical role in realising the potential of genomic medicine, where reliable and valid data are key to success. After more than three years of effort, we have successfully started building a genome database that not only consists primarily of Southern Chinese but also integrates clinical data with genomic information, covering more than 20 genetic disorders, rare diseases, and common cases.

To unlock the full potential of our database, we have also developed the Synergistic Research Environment (SRE). Once de-identified and encrypted, information within the genome database can be accessed by approved researchers, academic institutions and enterprises through the SRE. This initiative not only promotes innovations and applications of genomic medicine, but also accelerates clinical trials for new therapeutics, paving the way for faster and more precise drug development to transform patient care.

Dr Lo continued, "Currently, human genome databases that are shared internationally are largely European-based, with data from the Asian population representing only approximately 10%. This lack of diversity poses significant challenges to diagnosis and treatment. Our database aims to bridge this gap and facilitate the development of more targeted solutions for diagnosis, treatment and disease prevention for the broader community.

We are also thankful for AZ's high praise of the Hong Kong Genome Project. Indeed, an independent evaluation conducted by the University of Cambridge (Public Health Genomics Foundation) and the University of Hong Kong also recognised the Project's value, commending it for adhering to international standards in overall planning, operation, patient recruitment, and informed consent mechanisms. All of this recognition is very encouraging for us."

Dr Lifeng Tian of AZ remarked, "We are grateful for the opportunity to visit the Hong Kong Genome Institute and engage in knowledge exchange with a distinguished group of professionals in the field. We are particularly impressed by the world-class operational standards and workflow of their laboratory which align with international benchmarks. We firmly believe that integrating genomics into medicine to drive precision treatment is the way forward. The Institute's genome database, which covers various disease cohorts, provides effective local population data to support clinical trials. Its uniqueness makes it an extremely valuable research asset for the industry. We look forward to the opportunities to partner with HKGI to accelerate the R&D of new drugs and treatments with improved efficacy, driving further breakthroughs in healthcare services.

This exchange meeting has laid down a solid foundation for future dialogues and potential collaborations between the HKGI and AZ in genomic and pharmaceutical research. In light of the HKSAR Government's initiative to establish the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute and relevant policies aimed at promoting R&D and medical innovations for Hong Kong, HKGI will continue to engage various stakeholders to identify collaboration opportunities that advance genomic medicine and benefit the general public, contributing to Hong Kong's development as an international Health and Medical Innovation Hub.

Please download the photos from [here](#) and refer to the photo captions below.



(Photo 1) The Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI) held an exchange meeting with AstraZeneca (AZ) to discuss the latest technologies in genomic medicine, and advancement in therapeutic research and development with the aim to accelerate clinical trials for the benefit of patients. At the invitation of HKGI, representatives from the Health Bureau and the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises of the HKSAR Government were also in attendance.

First row from left:

Dr Brian Chung, Chief Medical and Scientific Officer, Hong Kong Genome Institute
Dr Lifeng Tian, Director, Head of Centre for Genomics Research China, AstraZeneca
Dr Lo Su-vui, Chief Executive Officer, Hong Kong Genome Institute
Dr Slavé Petrovski, Vice President, Centre for Genomics Research, AstraZeneca
Mr Sam Hui, Deputy Secretary for Health, Health Bureau, HKSAR Government
Dr Xiaoxiao Qian, Senior Director, Head of Strategy, R&D China, AstraZeneca



(Photo 2) The Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI) held an exchange meeting with AstraZeneca (AZ) to discuss the latest technologies in genomic medicine, and advancement in therapeutic research and development with the aim to accelerate clinical trials for the benefit of patients. At the invitation of HKGI, representatives from the Health Bureau and the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises of the HKSAR Government were also in attendance.

From left:

Dr Lo Su-vui, Chief Executive Officer, Hong Kong Genome Institute

Dr Slavé Petrovski, Vice President, Centre for Genomics Research, AstraZeneca

Dr Lifeng Tian, Director, Head of Centre for Genomics Research China, AstraZeneca

Mr Sam Hui, Deputy Secretary for Health, Health Bureau, HKSAR Government



(Photo 3) HKGI and AZ agreed to explore potential research collaborations under a patient-oriented principle to expedite clinical trials for new pharmaceuticals. This initiative seeks to foster innovations in genomic medicine and its applications, ultimately enhancing local healthcare services.



(Photo 4) The AZ team toured HKGI's laboratory, the first in Hong Kong equipped with a one-stop whole genome sequencing pipeline, where the facilities and operational workflows comply with international standards.



(Photo 5) The AZ team toured HKGI's laboratory, the first in Hong Kong equipped with a one-stop whole genome sequencing pipeline, where the facilities and operational workflows comply with international standards.

From left:

Dr Maggie Lo, Senior Vice President (Life and Health Technology), Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, HKSAR Government

Dr Lo Su-vui, Chief Executive Officer, Hong Kong Genome Institute

Dr Slavé Petrovski, Vice President, Centre for Genomics Research, AstraZeneca

Dr Lifeng Tian, Director, Head of Centre for Genomics Research China, AstraZeneca

Dr Xiaoxiao Qian, Senior Director, Head of Strategy, R&D China, AstraZeneca

Mr Sam Hui, Deputy Secretary for Health, Health Bureau, HKSAR Government

Dr Brian Chung, Chief Medical and Scientific Officer, Hong Kong Genome Institute

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About Hong Kong Genome Institute

The Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI), established and wholly owned by the Hong Kong SAR Government, commenced full operations in 2021. With the vision “to avail genomic medicine to all for better health and well-being” and supported by the Health Bureau, HKGI works in close collaboration with the Department of Health, Hospital Authority, medical schools of local universities and other stakeholders to accelerate the development of genomic medicine in Hong Kong along four strategic foci: integrate genomics into medicine, advance research, nurture talents and enhance public genomic literacy.

As the first step towards achieving its vision, HKGI launched the Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP) in 2021 focusing on diseases and research cohorts that would benefit from whole genome sequencing. They include undiagnosed diseases, hereditary cancers and cases related to genomics and precision health. Being the city’s first large-scale genome sequencing project, HKGP serves as a catalyst to benefit patients and their families with more precise diagnosis and personalised treatment. It also aims to establish genome database of the local population, testing infrastructure and talent pool to address the healthcare needs of Hong Kong in the long run.

For more information, please visit <https://hkgp.org/en>.

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