

a new business development structure to pull more early-stage projects into the company, explains Shaun Grady, vice president, strategic partnering and business development. Under Soriot's leadership, business development "has been identified as a platform for growth," Grady remarks. Previously the focus was on later-stage programs, for example, the \$1.4-billion acquisition in April 2012 of San Diego-based Ardea Biosciences, which brought in the phase 3 gout treatment lesinurad, and the June 2012 \$3.4-billion joint venture acquisition with Princeton, New Jersey-headquartered Bristol-Myers Squibb of Amylin Pharmaceuticals, to gain access to the approved once-a-week diabetes drug Bydureon (exenatide). In future "you can expect us to be more focused on moving down the pipeline," Grady says.

This intent has already been on display: between March 21 and April 24, AstraZeneca announced six early-stage deals and collaborations (Table 1). These included buying into unproven technologies, including

nanomedicines from BIND Therapeutics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and synthetic RNA therapies from Moderna (Box 1), taking licenses to discovery platforms and forming a new academic alliance.

The objective of partnering early is, in part, to get projects "more mixed into our own R&D activities," Grady says. He also promises a fresh approach to relationship building. "A lot is about behavior and how we interact with academics and small biotech." The company has set targets around how quickly it responds to an approach from a partner, the quality of feedback, being open and clear about what AstraZeneca is interested in, and being quick to say no if there is no interest.

Such a shake-up is sorely needed according to the CEO of one biotech, Onno van de Stolpe of Galapagos. The Mechelen, Belgium-based company has a very productive discovery platform that has generated numerous novel drug candidates and attracted high value deals—most notably the

March 2012 \$350-million partnership with AbbVie (then part of Abbott of Abbott Park, Illinois) for a Janus kinase 1 (JAK-1) inhibitor for treating rheumatoid arthritis.

Although AstraZeneca is a customer of the Galapagos drug discovery services subsidiary BioFocus, van de Stolpe says of previous encounters, "AstraZeneca is not easy to do any collaboration with—often they were not clear what they actually wanted, or if they did want something, they had problems coming up with the budget."

A huge amount of academic effort has been invested in attempts to understand the alchemy by which the world's leading high-tech clusters generate innovation, with few conclusive answers. On top of this imponderable, AstraZeneca is also taking a risk that it will be able to transplant essential skills and expertise from Alderley Park. Pangalos acknowledged that relocating "is never an easy thing," saying, "We will do everything we can to get our scientists down to the Cambridge area."

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