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Forming a Life Science 'Super Cluster'

Further steps towards "the Kobe Medical Industry Development Project"

The concept of Kobe becoming a Medical Industrial City began in 1999. Since then, focusing on the second stage of Port Island, Kobe has continued to develop into a life science 'super cluster' combining the industrial, academic and government sectors. Now after 8 years, more than 100 advanced companies have moved into the area. With its high grade infrastructure, Kobe is moving towards the realization of its goal of 'activating the Kobe economy, and improving the medical service standards and general health and welfare of citizens'.



Institute of Biomedical Research and Innovation (IBRI)

Three Functions of the Concept

The Kobe Medical Industrial City Concept involves three core functions: First, the function of helping research become utilized in practical medical treatment. This includes involvement in translational research (support for basic research), including developmental medicine, the development of medical devices, and the research and trial of medical supplies and drugs; Second, the function of supporting the re-vitalization of industry. This includes support through preferential systems and funds, and rental laboratories and offices, assisting in the development of bio-venture companies etc. The third function is dedicated to education and training. Through holding seminars, workshops, and symposia, medical industry personnel can be trained and developed in a variety of ways.

State of the art R&D into Regenerative Medicine and Molecular Imaging

At the Riken Center for Developmental Biology, responsible for conducting basic research, state of the art research into the developmental biology field is carried out, and based on these results IBRI (the Institute of Biomedical Research and Innovation), our core research institution, is developing treatments for blood vessels and alveolar bone regeneration treatments. Also, in the next few years we are hoping to further develop treatments for neurological and hormonal disorders, and within 10 years we hope to make possible regenerative treatments for reproduction and complicated nerve system networks.

Further, in January of this year Riken opened the Molecular Imaging Research and Development Center (for the design of possible drugs). The aim is to redesign the production process of drugs and reduce costs, shortening the development time for new diagnostic technologies through the use of PET to image and quantify living molecules and drug molecules

within the proteins etc. in the human body linking up with the micro-dosing-study.

System to Support the Advancement of Research and Business Activities

At the Translational Research Information Center (TRI), we are looking to provide a base for the support of translational research. In particular, in the "Cancer Translational Research Business" begun in 2003, we are supporting the management of intellectual property, the testing of manufactured items, the creation of procedural documentation and protocols for translational testing, and the management of progress being made in the industry. We support all processes for companies until they are able to find a base for their new drugs or treatments. We are also working on the translation into Japanese of the American National Cancer Research Center home page, which contains many useful information.

At the Foundation for Biomedical Research and Innovation, we are supporting the interaction of medical related companies entering the second stage of Port Island, or those expected to enter through our support of the "Kobe Medical Collaborative Exchange". This exchange holds events and seminars for researchers and companies, facilitating the advancement of cooperation and information exchange between companies. We have also begun a "Bio-matching" service on the internet, to match the needs of researchers and companies with potential research seed money, providing an essential list of Kobe-companies for partnering and finally with a useful Human Resource-portal.

The Development of Facilities and Funds

In February of last year, the "Kobe Medical Devices Development Center" was introduced, providing rental laboratories for the development and spread of medical device research. Here, with the use of pigs for experimentation, we are performing training and im-

plementing systems for manufacturers to develop new devices such as laparoscopes and endoscopes.

Also, at the "Medical Device Support Plaza", we receive many inquiries from all over the country, since we are one of the few public consultation entities for medical device development information.

Then in October of last year, we completed the "Kobe Healthcare Industry Development Center (HI-DEC)" rental laboratories and offices. With the use of wet labs for research, trial production, and development, incubation managers can better support venture businesses, and new businesses can be more easily created in the health industry. We also further intend to support business activities through cooperation with the nearby Riken Molecular Imaging Research and Development Area.

We have also developed venture funds, such as the "Bio-Medical Fund" aimed at the training of biotechnology ventures and supporting the acquisition of patents for universities or researchers, and the "Kobe Life Science IP Fund" helping start-up companies. In this way we are supporting ventures and helping to provide funds for business start-ups.

Evolving and Growing as a Medical Industry Cluster

In 2002, Kobe was selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, together with the Northern Osaka region (Saito), as an "Intellectual Cluster Development Business", and we are aiming to develop the Kansai region into a 'super cluster' of life sciences. With the gathering of the very best researchers, including Riken, and the support provided by the hard and soft infrastructure of the Second Stage of Port Island, this is a very attractive area for companies. By cooperating with other areas in the Kansai region, the possibilities are endless.

At the same time, we are seeking to promote a city design that allows its residents to 'enjoy a healthy lifestyle', through the extension of health and welfare services in state of the art medical fields.