

Korean companies mull on using AI for drug discovery

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In a bid to speed up drug discovery process and boost R&D efforts, Korea Pharmaceutical and Bio-pharma Manufacturers Association (KPBMA) has launched their first task force to jointly purchase an AI platform. This platform will be used by some 20 pharmaceutical companies in Korea, according to a leading daily Korea Biomedical Review.

The 18 local drug makers -- including Hanmi Pharmaceuticals, Green Cross, Dong A-ST, Daewoong Pharmaceuticals, Chong Kun Dang, and Yuhan,— discussed how to use AI in drug development in a meeting on Aug. 22.

During the meeting, they launched “AI-backed drug development’ task force under the KPBMA’s R&D policy committee. The task force will add two more pharmaceutical companies in the future,” said a KPBMA official as quoted by the news agency.

Artificial Intelligence technology aims to streamline the initial phase of drug discovery, which involves analyzing how different molecules interact with one another—specifically, scientists need to determine which molecules will bind together and how strongly. They use trial and error and process of elimination to analyze tens of thousands of compounds, both natural and synthetic.

Many pharma giants are realizing the potential of AI and inking deals to improve efficiency and drug discovery process. Earlier this year GSK has signed an agreement with Scotland based Exscientia for its AI platform. Exscientia also signed a 250 mn Euros deal with Sanofi in May. As part of this agreement, Exscientia will be responsible for all compound design, whilst chemistry synthesis will be delivered by Sanofi.

In the latest sign of big pharma’s interest in using supercomputers for drug discovery, AstraZeneca announced a collaboration with Boston-based Berg, a specialist in artificial intelligence for drug hunting. The tie-up will focus on finding and evaluating novel ways of treating Parkinson’s disease and other neurological disorders.