

# Charles River Laboratories is first CRO to join U.K.-based research consortium

By Jeremy Zucker

**C**harles River Laboratories is the first full-service contract research organization (CRO) to join the U.K.-based, international **Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium**.

The Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium is a collaborative matchmaking service established in 2015 that connects academic research centers, pharmaceutical companies and the industry's leading scientists in an effort to accelerate research and improve outcomes for patients. Prior to Charles River joining the consortium, its membership included three U.K. academic centers—**University of Cambridge, Sanger Institute** and **Babraham Institute**—along with pharmaceutical companies **GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca, Astex** and **Shionogi**.

"The Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium was a great fit for Charles River," said Tim O'Bryan, director of Global Strategic Alliances, Charles River. "As a company that supports all stages of drug discovery and preclinical development with facilities in Cambridge and around the globe, the opportunity to collaborate and interact with Milner's members will enhance our ability to accelerate the early development process for clients." Charles River has experienced previous successes through partnerships with U.S.-based consortia.

For Milner Therapeutics Institute and

Consortium, the goal of affiliated partnerships is to offer their network of academics and companies access to a range of new research service providers. "This partnership provides us with additional expertise in early discovery and drug development to support academic scientists in Cambridge," said Tony Kouzarides, founder and director of the Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium.

Partnerships like this enable CROs to build on the relationships developed and nurtured with academia over several years. In combination with large pharma, biotech and venture partnerships, organizations have further opportunities to become involved in the collaboration between academia and industry.

Collaborative research is a growing industry standard as the number of collaborations between companies and academics continues to increase. Kouzarides believes the decision by Charles River to join the consortium is part of a general recognition that the transition of knowledge from basic science into new therapies can be accelerated. "The pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry is hunting externally for innovation in disease understanding, new target discovery, and drug development," he said. "The role for a CRO like Charles River is to support academics in gaining relevant data to attract additional funding or industry col-

laboration on their research project."

Interactions between academia and industry are evolving as the early discovery process shifts. "CROs look at these collaborative research models as an opportunity to become a resource for input and assistance on program design, collaboration, and implementation," said O'Bryan.

The positive impact of the consortium research model will only become more apparent in the future.

"The Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium model brings together unique capabilities from academia, small spin-out companies, service providers and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sector," said Kouzarides. "Our vision is to facilitate and accelerate therapeutic research."

For Charles River, their hope is that the interactions with Milner Therapeutics Institute and Consortium can help guide novel therapeutics, developed in both academic and commercial labs, through the early development process. By working in tandem with academia and industry to help make early decisions around promising molecules, scientific discoveries will be accelerated.

Said O'Bryan, "We feel our scientific expertise in early discovery will ultimately help steer projects towards the clinic and deliver safer, more effective results for patients." 