



THE INSIDE STORY OF LIFE SCIENCES IN MAINLAND CHINA

Market sector
intelligence report

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Over the past decade, Mainland China's life sciences industry has faced a major transformation in efforts to bring the country to pharmaceutical and biotech superpower status. With an average annual sales revenue growth of 21.4 per cent, the Chinese pharmaceutical market, according to Deloitte, appears to be [fast reaching its USD 220 billion-dollar goal](#) by 2020, paring with the US as the largest contributor to the global pharmaceutical market.

PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR THE MAIN FOCUS IN MAINLAND CHINA, BUT THE CURRENT TALENT POOL IS INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT RAPID DEVELOPMENT

When revealing Beijing's 'Made in China 2025' strategic plan, President Xi Jinping highlighted the Chinese pharmaceutical sector as a key driver of growth. With the rapidly growing middle-class and aging population, [opportunities abound](#) for this vision to come to fruition. By 2020, China's healthcare expenditure on the percentage of GDP is [six to seven per cent](#), approximately USD 1 trillion. In addition, [McKinsey reports](#) "114 million diabetic patients and more than 700,000 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed each year" while the China Food and Drug Administration's (CFDA) continuous reforms are speeding up the development of pharmaceutical innovation in Mainland China.

Be that as it may, the expeditious maturation of the life sciences industry in Mainland China is fast [outpacing the talent supply](#) needed for business expansion. With recent [investment boosts](#) in Mainland China's pharmaceutical research and development programmes, the clinical research organisation (CRO) sector will see a corresponding growth, resulting in heightened demand for talent in this field.

In addition, the [ongoing development in R&D for cancer treatments](#) and oncology drugs are taking centre stage in the life sciences arena, thereby attracting a significant amount of capital investments and overseas scientist talents to be part of the thriving scene. Notwithstanding, there is a local market talent shortage due to skills mismatch, resulting in greater acceptance from hiring managers of industry cross-over. Employers have therefore been more receptive of candidates who are not experienced in oncology therapy.

MAINLAND CHINA'S MEDICAL DEVICES SECTOR IS BOOMING WITH GREAT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, LEADING TO INCREASED PRODUCT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Another driving force of Mainland China's life sciences industry is the technologically advancing medical devices sector, which has been steadily increasing in total sales revenue. With higher emphasis from the government to invest in the production of state-of-the-art medical devices, and the shift in focus from low-tech goods to medium-and-high-tech devices, the sector has achieved great leaps in annual revenue with an up to [20 per cent growth](#) year-on-year.

Such growth is set to develop even further with Mainland China's swelling health care market and greater governmental initiatives to improve the technologies behind medical device product development and design.

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As the volume of medical devices increases exponentially at the back of product launches from local enterprises to market entry strategies of foreign companies, product marketing or project managers play an increasingly important role in ensuring growing the business-to-business (b2b) market share.

This is especially so for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) which aim to develop their brand equity and awareness. However, as businesses across industries vie for talents in [project management and foreign language fluency](#), on top of the lack of supply of sector-specific product marketing or project managers, hiring managers have been more willing to hire such professionals who do not possess product-related knowledge.

EMPLOYERS ADDRESS TALENT SHORTAGE BY TURNING TO MAINLAND CHINESE GRADUATES AND OVERSEAS RETURNEES

To plug some of this talent shortage, companies are increasingly turning to the [10,000 Chinese](#) who return from studying or working in Life Sciences in the U.S. each year. Demand for these graduates, particularly those with bilingual capabilities, is at such a level that they are aggressively recruited via the private sector or government initiatives such as the [“Thousand Talents” Program](#).

But even with this influx of returnees and the 150,000 life science graduates, Mainland China produces annually, the rapid market expansion is expected to continue at such a pace for the next three to five years that demand will far outstrip talent supply. This is likely to exacerbate the already talent short market in R&D, particularly in the nascent field of precision medicine.

One result of this is that salaries are expected to rise well above the market average, with candidates in critically short areas commanding 20 per cent salary hikes, improved working conditions and career progression possibilities.

As Mainland China's influence grows in the Life Sciences industry both at home and abroad - with its researchers publishing research papers in increasing numbers, and the government continuing to back the industry through funding, regulations and the development of the national healthcare system to meet the struggles posed by diseases associated with its newly affluent population - companies will continue to seek out talent.

Whether that talent is developed in-house, fostered in top labs in the U.S., or comes from a foreign company enticed by Mainland China's vast market, it is imperative that they are found. Companies are looking for candidates who they believe can make things happen, something that is unique in the field, because it is in this way that Mainland China can perhaps succeed in its desire to overhaul the U.S. as the Life Sciences market leader.

If you would like to discuss this report in more depth or you wish to discuss your job search or recruitment needs, please email [Jack Gong](#), Hays senior recruiting manager for Life Sciences at Jack.Gong@hays.cn.

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