DATA GRAPHICS | DEALS

NewCo boom shows no signs of slowing

2025 brought at least 13 new companies founded in the West with Asian assets, and three more have already launched in 2026

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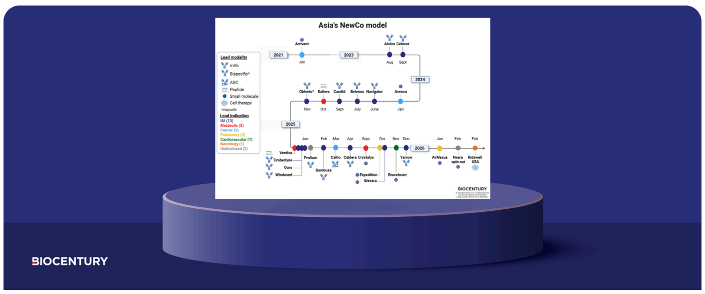

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After a boom year in 2025, Asia's NewCo model shows no sign of slowing. With Kidswell Bio's cell therapy spinout announced Monday, at least three NewCos have already launched in 2026.

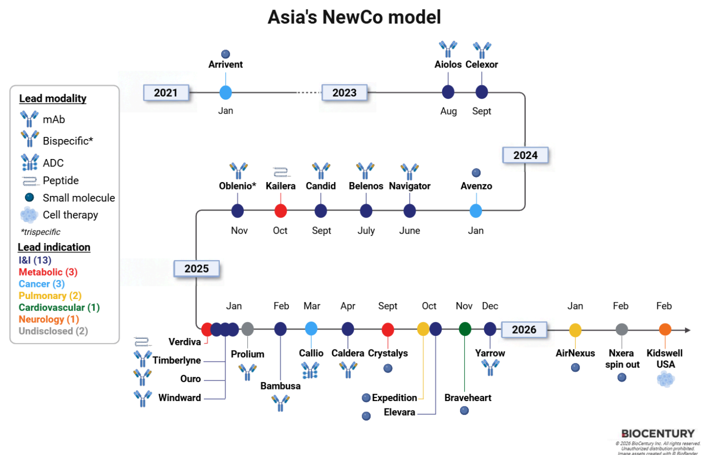
The model, in which assets from Asia are spun out into new biotechs in the West with backing from Western investors, exploded in popularity in 2025. The 13 NewCos announced that year more than doubled the six disclosed in 2024.

That momentum has carried into 2026. In January, Haisco Pharmaceutical Group Co. Ltd. (SZSE:002653) announced it was spinning out Phase II PDE-3/4 inhibitor HSK39004, now known as AN01, into Calif.-based NewCo AirNexis Therapeutics Inc., with $200 million from a Frazier Life Sciences-led syndicate. Then last week, Nxera Pharma Co. Ltd. (Tokyo:4565) announced it was licensing a GPCR-targeting program to an undisclosed NewCo backed by an international investment firm.

On Monday, Kidswell Bio Corp. (Tokyo:4584) launched the year's third NewCo, backed by Treehill Partners. The spinout, Kidswell USA, will develop autologous and allogeneic cell therapies for pediatric cerebral palsy using stem cells from human exfoliated deciduous teeth; lead program has already generated early clinical results in Japan. The parent company had a pre-IND meeting with FDA in November.

Kidswell USA is the first NewCo launched in the past five years to focus on cell therapy, and the first to target a neurology indication. The deal is also the second Japan-originated NewCo announced this year, underscoring a growing trend of Western VCs pairing Japanese science with U.S.-based leadership teams.

Altogether, BioCentury identified at least 25 NewCos formed since the start of 2021.



Of all the companies in BioCentury's BCIQ database that attracted series A funding in 2025, 8% (12/144) were NewCos licensing assets from Asia. These companies made up more than one-third (8/22) of the year's $100 million-plus series A megarounds.

These large early investments by Western VCs are a signal of the relatively de-risked nature of their assets. All but two of the 2025 series A NewCos formed with Chinese assets have at least some clinical data, highlighting the speed of human data generation in the region.

For the Asian company, these deals offer cash to fuel domestic development and potential upside in the form of milestones and equity stakes.

The 2025 NewCos skew toward more complex, next-gen biologics, including multi-payload ADCs and an expanding slate of bispecific and trispecific antibodies. T cell engagers are not new, but the NewCo model is increasingly built around assets already in the clinic.

For example, Ouro Medicines LLC licensed a BCMA-targeting T cell engager for multiple myeloma that was already in Phase II testing in China. With a $120 million series A round led by TPG, New Enterprise Associates and Norwest Venture Partners, Ouro's lead asset came from Keymed Biosciences Inc. (HKEX:2162). The San Francisco, Calif.-based biotech was founded by Monograph Capital in partnership with GSK plc (LSE:GSK; NYSE:GSK).

At least six other NewCos were formed around bispecific or trispecific antibodies, most for autoimmune indications — an emerging application for the modality.

Multispecific antibodies aren't the only complex biologics showing up in the recent NewCo crop. Multi-payload ADCs also made an appearance through the launch of Callio Therapeutics Inc., with assets from Singapore-based Hummingbird Bioscience Pte. Ltd. Callio attracted $187 million in series A funds, led by founding VC Frazier. The company's lead program is a preclinical, dual-payload ADC targeting HER2 for cancer.

Western VCs repeatedly leading NewCo series A financings in 2025 include Forbion, Novo Holdings A/S and OrbiMed Advisors LLC.

Forbion co-led the $411 million A round for Verdiva Bio Ltd., the largest of the series A rounds in 2025. The U.K.-based NewCo launched licensing an oral GLP-1 peptide, along with oral and subcutaneous amylin agonists for obesity and cardiometabolic diseases, from Chinese biotech Hangzhou Sciwind Biosciences Co., joining NewCo Kailera Therapeutics Inc. in the hot obesity arena.

Forbion also co-led A rounds for NewCos Braveheart Bio Inc. and Elevara Medicines Ltd. Novo Holdings co-led $100 million-plus A megarounds for NewCos Windward Bio AG, Expedition Therapeutics Inc., and Crystalys Therapeutics Inc.; OrbiMed also co-led for Braveheart Bio and Windward.

As momentum continues to grow for East-to-West dealmaking, Western VCs are also looking outside of China for attractive assets, with other countries in the East joining the list in 2025.

Crystalys and Elevara were two NewCos attracting series A funds in 2025 that licensed assets from Japanese biotechs, in addition to Callio licensing an asset from Singapore.

While BioCentury did not identified any NewCos formed around assets from South Korea in 2025, the country's ABL Bio Inc. (KOSDAQ:298380) spun out Palo Alto, Calif.-based Neok Bio with two bispecific ADCs. ABL Bio was the sole investor in Neok Bio's $75 million series A. The start-up expects to start Phase I studies this year of NEOK001 and NEOK002, which target ROR1/B7-H3 and EGFR/MUC1, respectively.

East-West NewCo Model

2025 series A companies founded in the West with assets from Asia

NewCo	Country	Origin	Description	Lead phase*	Amt. ($M)	Lead investors
China						
Verdiva	U.K.	Sciwind	Oral GLP-1 peptide; oral and subcutaneous amylin agonists for obesity and cardiometabolic diseases	Ph I	$411	Forbion, General Atlantic
Windward	Switz.	Kelun-Biotech/ Harbour	Anti-TSLP mAb WIN378 for asthma, COPD	Ph I	$200	OrbiMed, Novo Holdings, Blue Owl
Braveheart	U.S.	Hengrui	Small-molecule cardiac myosin inhibitor BHB-1893 for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy	Ph II	$185	a16z, Forbion, OrbiMed
Timberlyne	U.S.	Keymed	Anti-CD38 mAb for autoimmune diseases	Ph I/II	$180	Abingworth, Bain, Venrock
Expedition	U.S.	Fosun	Oral DPP1 inhibitor for COPD and neutrophil-driven diseases	Ph I	$165	Sofinnova Investments, Novo Holdings
Ouro	U.S.	Keymed	T cell engagers for immune diseases; lead targeting BCMA	Ph II	$120	TPG, NEA, Norwest
Bambusa	U.S.	Biotheus	Bispecific Abs BBT001-004 for immunology and inflammation	Preclin	$90	RA Capital
Caldera	U.S.	Qyuns	Anti-TNF TL1A/IL-23 bispecific Ab CLD-423 for inflammatory bowel disease	Preclin	$75	Atlas, Lilly Asia Ventures, Venbio
Yarrow	U.S.	GenSci	Anti-TSHR mAb GS-098 (YB-101) for thyroid eye disease, Graves' disease	Ph I/II	$6	RTW
Japan						
Crystalys	U.S.	Fuji Yakuhin	Oral URAT1 inhibitor approved to treat gout	Mkt in Asia; Ph III	$205	Novo Holdings, SR One, Catalys
Elevara	U.K.	Teijin	Oral CDK4/6 inhibitor ELV001 targeting fibroblast-like synoviocytes for rheumatoid arthritis	Ph I	$70	Forbion, Sofinnova Partners
Singapore						
Callio	U.S.	Hummingbird	Multi-payload ADCs for cancer, lead anti-HER2 HMBD-802	Preclin	$180	Frazier Life Sciences

*Source: Press releases, company websites • *Lead asset phase at signing. Includes 2025 series A, therapeutics-focused companies with disclosed amounts raised.*

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