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Global Alliances: Structuring Successful Cross-Border Life Sciences Partnerships

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Cross-border life sciences partnerships have become one of the most powerful and complex routes to innovation. As deal activity involving Chinese biotech assets accelerates, companies are facing faster timelines, more sophisticated structures, new sources of pricing and regulatory uncertainty – reshaping how these transactions are crafted and executed.

While innovation remains the catalyst, success increasingly depends on execution. Successful companies are adapting quickly: rethinking the way deals are sourced, negotiated and structured to keep up with the evolving realities of the related marketing.

Life sciences leaders pursuing cross-border partnerships in this increasingly complex landscape should keep in mind the below themes when approaching the table:

Cross-border deal activity is accelerating.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality and maturity of assets emerging from China over the past decade, particularly in oncology and biologics. Faster generation of human clinical data and strong scientific execution have made Chinese biotech a compelling source of global partnering opportunities.

Deal timelines are compressing.

Competition for differentiated assets has led to increasingly compressed deal timelines. Parties often move quickly from initial evaluation to exclusivity, with negotiations that once took many months now closing in weeks. While speed can preserve momentum, it puts pressure on diligence and documentation.

Innovation is increasing structural complexity.

Advances in biologics are adding complexity to deal structures. Agreements must now address sophisticated development paths, manufacturing considerations and governance mechanisms tailored to these modalities.

MFN-related uncertainty is reshaping negotiations.

Emerging most-favored-nation (MFN)-style concerns related to pricing and policy have injected new uncertainty into dealmaking. Parties are increasingly negotiating trigger-based adjustments, conditional shifts in control, and financial consequences tied to future regulatory or pricing developments.

Cross-border life sciences partnerships are no longer the exception – they are a core strategy for accessing innovation. The challenge is building them for resilience: balancing speed with structure, competition with collaboration and short-term deal pressure with long-term operational reality.

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