

Novartis Biome Canada is driving digital solutions

Canadian Biome to serve as a collaboration on-ramp for the discovery and development of scalable digital solutions for patients and healthcare providers.

- The Biome will enable the brightest minds in healthcare, data science, technology and artificial intelligence to converge
- Latest in global network of Novartis innovation facilities based in Montreal's world-renowned artificial intelligence research institute, Mila

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. announced today the launch of the Novartis Canada Biome, an innovative hub that will bring together and empower emerging tech companies and people who are passionate about disrupting healthcare through data and digital technologies. The announcement was made at the virtual XEFFERVESCENT Digital and AI in the Healthcare Industry event, together with federal and provincial ministers and key industry and community organizations.

The Canadian Biome Digital Innovation Hub, located in the heart of Montreal's dynamic and world-renowned artificial intelligence (AI) community, joins the global network introduced by Novartis in October 2018 with the launch of the first Biome in the digital heartland of Silicon Valley. The network has since expanded to include hubs in the United Kingdom, France, India and now Canada.

This announcement follows on from the strategic alliance created last year between Novartis and Mila, the Montreal AI research institute founded in 1993 by Professor Yoshua Bengio. The Biome will be headquartered at Mila where start-ups and entrepreneurs who will become partners within the Biome will have access to the Novartis Canada team so ideas can be converted quickly into solutions for patients. Recognizing the momentum for innovative digital solutions is here and now, partners will have available to them the growing network of Novartis Digital Innovation Hubs in global centres as well as resources to scale up ideas as fast as possible to help patients and healthcare providers in Canada and around the world.

Bridging digital technology and patient needs

The goal of the Biome is to converge data science, technology and artificial intelligence in an environment that harnesses the best minds and talent. The Biome is a natural extension of Novartis activities and partnerships dedicated to AI and digital innovation for healthcare solutions.

One such partnership already under way is with the Canadian virtual care specialist company Insig Health to launch a digital health accelerator which provides the tools, resources and insights to help healthcare practitioners take their virtual care practice to the next level.

Other companies who are already part of the Biome network include ConversationHEALTH which powers conversational AI solutions to transform how we engage healthcare professionals, patients and consumers. Another company Novartis has pursued is Amblyotech, a digital therapeutics company. Novartis is working with Ubisoft and McGill University on the start-up's novel digital technology to develop active and passive digital therapies to treat amblyopia ("lazy eye").

A concrete example of embracing digital technologies to help meet people's needs is exactly what founder and CEO of AccessNow, Maayan Ziv, had in mind when she created an app that uses crowdsourcing to collect and share the accessibility status of locations for people with disabilities. Maayan's inspiration was personal;

she lives with muscular dystrophy and understands the challenges of navigating a largely inaccessible world in a wheelchair. In recognition of the positive impact AccessNow brings people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) and other disabilities around the world, Maayan was awarded the \$250,000 USD Novartis Innovation Prize for Assistive Tech1.

The Canadian Biome receives a warm welcome by key speakers

Today's virtual inauguration event for the Novartis Canada Biome was presided over by Christian Macher, Country President, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc., and attended by the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and the Honourable Pierre Fitzgibbon, Quebec's Minister of Economy and Innovation who both addressed virtual attendees. Biome launch participants also included Stéphane Paquet, Chief Executive Officer, Montréal International. As well, Alexandre Le Bouthillier, Co-Founder and Chief Corporate Officer, Imagia took part in an afternoon AI for Health roundtable.

All welcomed the opportunity to address the creation of a Biome at Mila.

Christian Macher, Country President, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc.

"We are extremely fortunate to have access to a rich and vibrant technology community here in Montreal and throughout Canada. Our goal with the Biome is to become the leading health tech pharma company in Canada, working in collaboration with health tech pioneers who will become our partners in creating better healthcare solutions that can help enhance and accelerate the patient journey from diagnosis through treatment. We will be calling on start-ups to join us to help address some of the healthcare challenges Canadians face."

The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Government of Canada:

"It was with projects like Novartis' new Biome facility in mind that our government invested \$125 million in the Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy. Investments like these ensure Canada is a world-leading destination for talented researchers and companies in AI and healthcare innovations. This new facility is an exciting step in our collective efforts to create innovative solutions for patients and healthcare providers in Canada and around the world."

The Honourable Pierre Fitzgibbon, Minister of Economy and Innovation, Government of Quebec:

"The creation of the Novartis Canada Biome in Montreal is a prime example of Quebec's leadership in pharmaceutical innovation and digital technology. Bringing together the life sciences and artificial intelligence sectors could make it possible to offer decisive new treatments for patients in Quebec and around the world."

Stéphane Paquet, Chief Executive Officer, Montréal International:

"The Novartis Canada Biome will connect two of Montreal's great international intellectual resources – the innovative pharmaceutical industry and the digital and artificial intelligence community – for the benefit of patients by developing new technology-driven healthcare tools. This type of collaboration is precisely why Montréal International prioritizes the development of such high-tech sectors."

Geralyn Ochab, Chief Executive Officer, Imagia, a Montreal-based AI healthcare company partnering with

Novartis, developing digital medical innovations to improve care pathways and predict response to treatments, accelerating personalized healthcare.

“The Novartis Canada Biome is imperative in fostering collaboration with AI companies such as Imagia, to speed up digital discoveries and bring practical AI solutions to healthcare providers with the common goal to impact and improve the patient journey.”

Yes

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