TRENDS-in-MEDICINE

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by Ethan Snyder, staff writer

Summary

This new annual conference got off to a good start in its first year – with great speakers, good topics, and a focus on artificial intelligence, robotics, and drug development, particularly traditional Chinese medicine. The Global Innovation Show joins a growing list of conferences that are showcasing the technology, drugs, and research coming out of Asia, particularly out of China. It should be on your schedule for 2026, so note the dates: August 25-27 in Hong Kong.

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GLOBAL INNOVATION SHOW (GIS) & SUMMIT

Hong Kong

December 1-3, 2025

This was the first of what is planned to be an annual event, and it got off to a great start. While a big focus was robotics – and there were all kinds of robots everywhere interacting with attendees – the theme, East Meets West, was broader than just robotics. It was a big "tent," with a number of Chinese biotechs having booths on the exhibit floor and a whole forum devoted to Global Innovative Medicine, with talks focused on artificial intelligence (AI) in drug development, especially traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

GIS was hosted by the Global Tech Innovation Alliance (GTIA) in Hong Kong and co-hosted by the Silicon Valley Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum (SVIEF), the International Private Equity Forum (IPEF), and Bauhinia Magazine, and was organized by Beijing Gaochuang Technology, Beijing Zhongji Shengshi Intelligent Technology, and Shanghai Suyuan Technology, with a lot of other organizations helping to launch this meeting.

The conference chair, Benjamin Fok Chun Yue, director of the Fok Ying Tung Foundation and a prominent Hong Kong businessman and philanthropist, is a graduate of the University of British Columbia in Canada and earned a masters degree at the University of California Berkeley. GIS was founded by Iris Lei, founder/executive chairman of SVIEF, with the help of several co-founders, including Jing Li, PhD (*pictured here*), an intellectual property attorney who has been admitted to both the New York bar and the Chinese bar, and who is also founder of IPEF.

Robotics companies presenting included:

- **DEEP Robotics**
- **Noetix Robotics**, which had its robot walking the exhibit hall floor and shaking hands with attendees.
- **Shenzhen Ledzcoo Technology**, which was showing its AI "companions" (pets).
- **Unitree Robotics**
- **Zaowu Technology**, which was showing robotic pet animals.

Other interesting companies

AIGenAI Technology – This Chinese company has animal health technology, **AmoPaw**, which really was catching eyes at GIS. It is a contactless electrocardiogram (EKG) for pets (cats and dogs). It works a bit like AliveCor's Kardia for humans, but it works remotely, without requiring that fingers (or paws) touch a pad. And the pet's hair doesn't have to be shaved. The company also exhibited AmoPaw in January 2026 at the Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas. It is a really clever idea, and every pet owner who heard about AmoPaw at GIS wanted one!

- **Shanghai Waterfall Medical Technology** which was showing hearing aids that gained FDA clearance in 2023.

HEALTHCARE RELATED TALKS

GIS' Global Healthcare Forum was organized by Liping Yang, MD, director of the Psoriasis Research Institute of Guangzhou, China, general manager of the Guangdong High Scientific Technology Pharmacy Co (HiST), and a professor at Jinan University in Guangdong, China. Dr. Yang put together a good program that brought AI, traditional Chinese medicine, and drug development together under one tent.

Dr. Yang was also a speaker at GIS, and his talk, which was entirely in Chinese like most (but not all) the talks, addressed the future development of biopharmaceuticals and Big Health: "Modernization, Industrialization and Internationalization of TCM in China: Innovative Thinking and Exploratory Practice."

Getting traditional Chinese medicines – including TC Cream, which his company (HiST) has gotten approved in China and is working to get approved by the FDA – available to the rest of the world is his key mission.

AI Reinventing Healthcare

by Christine Yuan Huang, MD, MPH, founder of Quantum Life and Technology Transfer Director for the University of Hong Kong's Hong Kong Quantum AI Lab. Quantum Life was spun-off of InnoHK, an initiative of the Hong Kong SAR government, a science park with >25 research laboratories focused on AI and robotics.

Quantum aims to use AI to extend human longevity. And one way it hopes to do that is through on-line continuing medical education courses by volunteer biomedical professionals that are aimed at physicians, researchers, and others interested in longevity medicine. The courses qualify for continuing medical education credit in the U.S.

Quantum Life also invented the world's first multi-omics platform, Longevity.Omics (https://longevityomics.tech/), which specializes in aging pathology. Longevity.Omics analyzes biological data to provide users with personalized health insights and actionable recommendations. The goal is to prevent diseases before they arise.

Innovation in Translational Medicine

by Jiang (Terence) Yang, PhD, a principal investigator at Sun-yat Sen University Cancer Center (SYSUCC) in Guangzhou, China.

Dr. Yang, who specializes in developing novel nanoparticle agents for diagnosing and treating cancer and inflammatory conditions, particularly multimodal molecular imaging probes, did post doctoral research at Stanford University and at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center before joining SYSUCC in 2018. He also has led FDA-approved trials.

Dr. Yang explored the interdisciplinary intersection between medical innovation and AI. He outlined three global models of translational medicine:

- The "catch-up and parallel-run" model, exemplified by China's efficiency and cost advantages in clinical development.
- The "global leader" model, characterized by the U.S.'s strong ecosystem for breakthrough innovation.
- The "research-driven" model, seen in Europe, which excels in early scientific discovery but faces challenges in commercialization.

Dr. Yang's presentation highlighted pressing challenges in modern healthcare, including increased disease burden, aging populations, unequal resource distribution, and the lengthy, costly drug development cycle. To address these complex

issues, he advocated a "Medicine + X" interdisciplinary approach, where "X" encompasses AI, robotics, economics, management, and law. This approach aims to provide new tools, perspectives, and solutions, turning healthcare into a high-value application domain for technological and societal innovation.

He emphasized the need to break conventional boundaries in drug development, both "bottom-up" using clinical data and "top-down" from discovery mechanisms, highlighting the importance of collaboration and feedback to advance innovation in translational medicine.

AI-Driven Revolution in Longevity Medicine

Huijun Ring, PhD, a molecular biologist from Stanford University, discussed the "AI-Driven Revolution in Longevity Medicine."

Dr. Ring explained that the Eastern (or TCM) approach is to view the body as an ecological system that is inter-dependent and has emergent properties, while the Western approach is to view the body as a machine, with independent parts. She predicted that AI will lead to new ways to extend longevity, and she described how AI is being used in:

- The formulation of Chinese herbal medicines as well as in traditional drug development.
- Medical robotics for acupuncture and massage therapy, not just surgery.
- Identifying and analyzing hidden health issues with an AI scan of a patient's tongue – a high tech version of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). This is a research project at Stanford.
- A personal AI health coach in a TCM Agent Clinic that can develop a personalized wellness plan for each person with specific herbal formulations identified. As an example, she pointed to Zenhealth.ai, which is empowering AI with Eastern healing wisdom as a sort of "health coach."

Stanford has a Center for Integrative Medicine which Dr. Ring described as an ***integrative care model*** that Stanford developed in which healthcare professionals are trained in both conventional medicine and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM):

- Treatment: acupuncture, Taichi as supportive care, adjustment of medication.
- Education: whole person health, food therapy, self-massage and acupressure, Taichi for stress management.
- Coordination of care: healthcare professionals trained in both conventional medicine and TCM.

The key is that this model combines 3 things: (A) the animal model (whole-system validation), (O) the organoid model (micro-scale organ simulation), and (D) a digital model (using AI and data simulation). But Dr. Ring stressed that AOD is not simply 3 models combined; it is a multi-layered intelligent system for rapid hypothesis generation, closed-loop validant, and cross-scale integration.

She also pointed to courses Stanford is offering in:

- The science and history of traditional Chinese medicine.
- Exploring Chinese medicine.
- Tradition and technology of Chinese medicine and global public health.

Dr. Ring's bottom line: "The future of medicine does not lie in competition between East and West but in bridging ancient wisdom and modern science."

Artificial Intelligence, Drug Discovery, and Human Aging *by Trends-in-Medicine's Lynne Peterson*

Before giving her keynote speech, Lynne was honored to be asked to help present the first GIS annual awards. Then, in her talk, the message she brought was intended to encourage Chinese companies – including TCM companies – to bring their products to the U.S.

As she explained, there really is a need for those products. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the **rate** at which the population is aging has increased, and by 2030 1 in 6 people in the world will be age ≥60. With aging comes a long list of potential health issues – from back and neck pain to cataracts, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, and many other conditions. There are also age-related changes such as falls, neuropathy, pressure ulcer, urinary incontinence, a variety of dermatologic conditions, and more.

AI can help – and already is helping – with human aging through applications aimed at extending the healthy lifespan through improving diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for older adults. This includes:

- Creating personalized health and wellness plans
- Assisting with daily living and monitoring health
- Developing tools to measure biological age
- Helping to maintain independence longer

The big new area is **accelerating drug discovery for age-related diseases**, and the role of AI in this is moving ***very rapidly***. In a study, published in ***Aging Cell*** in May 2025, scientists at Scripps Research and **Gero**, a biotechnology company in Singapore, reported using AI to identify drugs that combat aging by targeting ***multiple*** age-related biological pathways at the same time – at least in worms.

- >70% of the anti-aging drugs identified by their AI tool significantly extended the lifespan of a microscopic worm, *Caenorhabditis elegans*.
- AI successfully guided the design of drugs that work through this complex mechanism.
- The study showed: There ***is*** a role for AI in polypharmacology in anti-aging.

There are actually a number of recent medical discoveries in ***treating*** aging…and AI holds promise in assisting or advancing those. A discovery, published in ***Cell***, by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Capital Medical University:

- A new type of human stem cell – senescence-resistant mesenchymal progenitor cells (SRCs), created by reprogramming genetic pathways associated with longevity, including the FOXO3 gene.
- In a 44-week trial, elderly cynomolgus monkeys who received biweekly intravenous infusions of SRCs led to a significant rejuvenation.
- Treated monkeys showed improved memory, healthier brain structures, stronger bones, and restored reproductive function – with no adverse effects reported. The rejuvenation ranged from 5-7 years.
- The transplanted cells did not cause tumors or tissue damage.

In **China**, AI is already significantly accelerating drug discovery where deep learning is being used for:

- Target identification – identifying novel disease targets
- Molecule design
- Property prediction
- Optimizing clinical trials
- Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) – identifying quality markers in herbs and analyzing compatibility mechanisms between different herbs.

Tech companies and startups are building AI platforms to:

- Analyze huge datasets
- Shorten development timelines (from years to just months)
- Reduce costs, which is also leading to advancements in traditional Chinese medicine quality control.

And Chinese companies are at the forefront of AI in healthcare: Developing sophisticated platforms and models that can predict compound efficacy, molecular properties, and protein interactions. Between 2014 and 2023, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) estimated:

- **China filed >38,000 generative AI patent applications** – with a significant portion of these dedicated to drug development and compound screening
- **South Korea** filed 4,155
- **Japan** filed 3,409

Companies and initiatives with AI drug discovery efforts underway in China include:

- **Huawei** – developed the Pangu Drug Molecule Model, which has been used to help design a compound for treating **antimicrobial resistance**
- **Insilico Medicine** – partnered with quantum computing researchers to create molecules targeting previously undruggable proteins
- **neoX Biotech** – focused on early drug discovery with sophisticated AI platforms
- **XtalPi** – an AI drug discovery company that has partnered with major pharmaceutical companies (e.g., Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson)
- **Major tech companies** – (e.g., Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent) are leveraging their AI expertise to develop drug discovery platforms

No AI-designed drug is yet on the U.S. market, though several candidates have entered human clinical trials for various conditions, including: lung disease, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and superbugs like gonorrhea and MRSA. However, ***none*** is directly aimed at treating aging and aging-related conditions.

A key message was the importance of working with the FDA, following the FDA's rules, doing things the way the FDA directs. And finding a U.S. partner is important for a Chinese company planning to bring its drug to the U.S. – both to get through the FDA process and to market the product when it is approved. Without a partner, how do they plan to sell their drug in the U.S.? How would they build a sales team? With a partner, they would have a little lower margin but likely a lot more sales.

How the company works with the FDA is also important. Her advice:

- If and when FDA officials or staff members speak at a conference, on a webcast, or in any public forum, **LISTEN**…and take what they say seriously. The FDA officials will often lay

out exactly what the FDA wants in terms of data and results – and they mean exactly what they say.

- **Talk** to the FDA. Share information, that's safe, and it builds trust.
- Take advantage of key opportunities to **meet with the FDA**…and do this in person if at all possible, so the staff get to know you. And listen to what they say.

A good example of a Chinese TCM company that is approaching the U.S. market and the FDA correctly is **HiST Pharm** and its subsidiary **Psoriasis Research Institute of Guangzhou (PRIG) which has developed TC Cream (10%)**, a topical cream derived from extract of a botanical, the *Cnidium monnieri (L.) Cuss.* Plant. TC Cream was approved in China in 2022 by the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA), making it the first approved botanical small-molecule drug for treating **psoriasis**.

What has HiST done right? It has been building awareness in the U.S. ahead of approval by presenting positive Phase IIb trial results at the 2024 American Academy of Dermatology annual meeting in San Diego, which found:

- Compared to placebo, twice-daily administration of TC Cream significantly improved two key measures in psoriasis:
  - ✓ The Investigator's Static Global Assessment (ISGA) score improved by ≥2 (18.2% vs. 0). And those results were maintained four weeks post-treatment. The effect was also fairly quick, with 36.4% of TC Cream users showing clear skin by Week 8 vs. just 6.8% of placebo patients.
  - ✓ PASI-75, a key measure in dermatology, was achieved by significantly more TC Cream patients vs. placebo.
- Good safety, with no serious adverse events reported.
- The FDA has authorized a Phase III trial in the U.S., and sites are enrolling. HiST is also looking for a U.S. partner.

And, HiST is also a good example of the East Meets West theme of GIS – it is bringing a traditional Chinese medicine to the U.S.

We look forward to the 2026 Global Innovation Show & Global Innovation Summit in Hong Kong August 25-27, 2026.

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