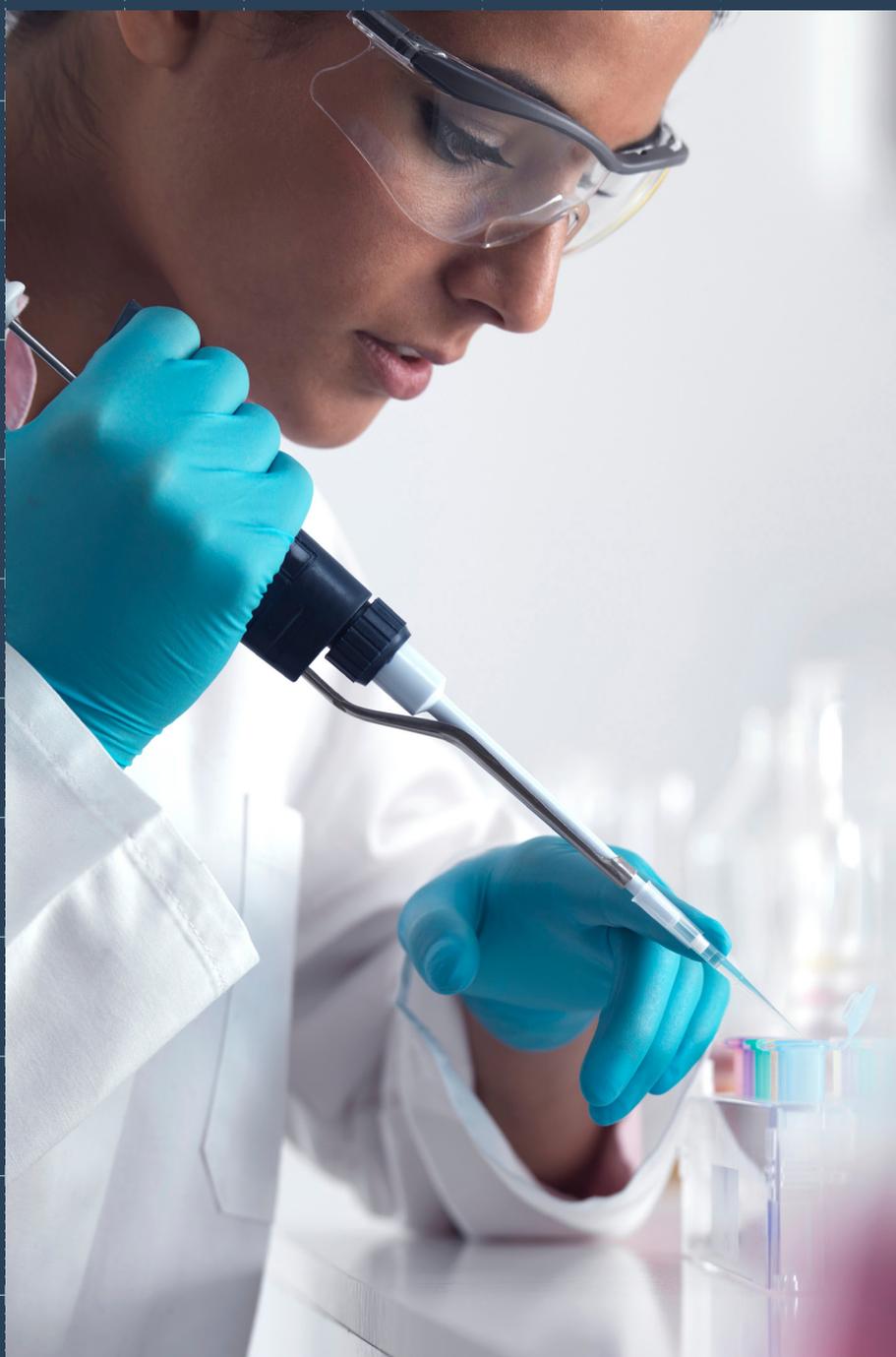


INFECT GROWTH



SHUTTERSTOCK

stage clinical trials – which can be run by global pharma companies like Eli Lilly, Roche and Pfizer or by smaller UK biotechs,” explains CEO Stuart Young. “We work hard to help them meet their goals of getting trials started quickly and ensuring that they meet their patient enrolment targets on time.”

A major vaccine trial might require 30,000 patients, so this is no small task. The government target for starting a trial within an NHS hospital trust is 150 days. As a private sector specialist Panthera can, says Young, get a phase two or three trial up and running in around 50 days, because unlike a hospital, which is trying to squeeze a highly specialised process into an already busy workload, it is entirely focused on clinical trials. “Patients get the benefit of taking part in the clinical trial, reducing the burden on NHS hospital doctors,” he adds.

Grant Goodwin, the LDC investment director responsible for backing Panthera Biopartners, explains that faster and more efficient trials are a win-win-win for the company, patient health and the economy. “Panthera provides critical services to the majority of large pharma companies in the world. It helps them bring new drugs to market much quicker, and achieve better outcomes for patients.”

LDC is an experienced partner, he adds, investing £450m in 19 healthcare and life sciences businesses over the past decade. It offers expertise in a range of options including organic growth, acquisitions, overseas expansion and new product development. And because it gets capital from Lloyd's Bank, Goodwin and his colleagues do not need to fundraise. “We are there to support CEOs like Stuart,” he says. “Ambitious businesses with a clear growth strategy.”

The UK is going to need many more successful high growth firms if it is to achieve its goals for the sector. The government's 10 year Life Sciences Sector Plan (LSSP) published last July aims to make the UK not only the leading life sciences economy in Europe by 2030, but the third largest globally, behind the US and China, by 2035. That equates to growth of no less than 165 per cent.

Thanks to its partnership with LDC, Panthera has not only the capital but the strategic support it needs to grow into a global leader. With seven world-class research sites running trials across the UK, Panthera is now turning its attention overseas. “We are looking to expand into a number of European countries,” says Young.

“LDC is the right partner to help us do that. They assist us with strategy and skills as well as financing options. For businesses like ours there is no shortage of investors – but LDC brings much more than money to the table.”

165%

Government forecast for sector growth by 2035 if trends continue

41%

Industry financial turnover outside London, the southeast and east of England

Britain aims to become Europe's top life sciences economy by 2030 and third globally by 2035 – the challenge for the £100 billion sector is to accelerate crucial drug trials

From penicillin to the first Covid-19 vaccine, the UK has an outstanding track record of breakthroughs in medicine and the life sciences. This translates directly into economic, societal, health and quality of life benefits for the entire country. The sector contributes around £100 billion in gross value added to the UK economy annually, employs some 300,000 people and provides vital drugs and therapeutic treatments for millions.

This makes life sciences one of the most significant components of UK industry. The government has recognised this by putting it at the heart of the flagship Modern Industrial Strategy, a package of policy measures that identifies eight investment priority areas to drive growth. The sector's reach is countrywide: 41 per cent of its £108 billion annual turnover is generated outside London, the southeast and east of England. “The life sciences is a high value-add industry – it fuels jobs and economic growth nationally. It makes sense to have it as one of eight key sectors,”

says Dr Amit Thaper, investment director at LDC, the private equity investor, which is part of Lloyds Banking Group. LDC supports businesses in all regions and sectors of the UK economy including healthcare and life sciences.

It's a major source of export income – £25.6 billion of pharmaceuticals and £10.1 billion of medical technology products were exported in 2023. It is also the UK's most research intensive sector, accounting for 17 per cent of all R&D undertaken by UK businesses. This research is underpinned by



The clinical trials sector is thriving in the UK thanks to firms like Panthera

the country's longstanding tradition of academic excellence. The UK is home to 16 of the world's top 100 life sciences universities, as well as international centres of research excellence such as the Francis Crick Institute, and accounts for some 90 Nobel prizes in chemistry, physiology or medicine.

A thriving sector also requires great execution. Take the field of clinical trials – a crucial but sometimes overlooked part of the drug development process which is the key to going from a promising but untested new treatment to a fully licensed drug that helps patients live longer and healthier lives.

It can take a pharma company 10 years and an investment of £200 million to get a drug through phase three clinical trials – the “gold standard” in proving safety and efficacy. One company helping to streamline the process is Preston-based Panthera Biopartners, which LDC invested in last year to support its growth. Panthera is the UK's leading site management organisation, recruiting patients and running clinical trials on behalf of pharma in community settings alongside GPs, which reduces the strain on hospital capacity and yields faster results. “We mostly recruit patients for late

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WE CAN GET A PHASE TWO OR THREE TRIAL UP AND RUNNING IN AROUND 50 DAYS – DOWN FROM 150

STUART YOUNG, CEO, PANTHERA BIOPARTNERS



LDC