

MPM has collected three China drugs for its 'best of both worlds' strategy

by Kyle LaHucik on April 29th, 2026



MPM BioImpact, a leading biotech investor, is going all in on its strategy to take China-born drugs to the global stage.

Over the past year, its portfolio company K2 Therapeutics has amassed three drug programs spanning antibody-drug conjugates and T cell engagers — two popular oncology treatment modalities central to many of the East-to-West licensing deals that have taken the industry by storm.

K2's latest deal came last week, in an up to \$730 million biobucks package for a 5T4-targeted ADC out of Adcoris. Hangzhou-based Adcoris was founded in 2021 and has brought treatment candidates, including a HER2 ADC, into the clinic. The 5T4-focused deal was [disclosed](#) on WeChat.

Multiple biotech VC firms have latched onto the NewCo strategy, in which they invest in new biotechs that are set up around assets in-licensed from Chinese drug developers. Forbion, RA Capital, Novo

Holdings, OrbiMed and many others have taken part in some of the nearly 20 such companies since the beginning of 2025.

MPM is taking a slightly different twist to the model. Around the end of 2024, the four-decade-old firm set up K2 in Singapore. The team there scours potential best-in-class medicines in China.

K2 is amalgamating the ex-China rights to medicines that already have early clinical data in their native country. The goal is to then test them further in Western countries and manufacture them outside of China.

“We want to basically combine the best of both worlds,” Ansbert Gadicke, managing partner at MPM BioImpact and executive chair of K2, told *Endpoints News* in an interview. He said they want to be “synergistic or complementary rather than” make drug development between the regions “purely competitive.”

The firm chose Singapore because it’s relatively easy for US companies to do business there, with a similar legal system and corporate governance structure, he said. Plus, it’s in the same time zone as China.

“Whenever we see an interesting protein therapeutics project in the US, there’s a sense that there may be 10 or more competitors coming out of China,” MPM BioImpact managing partner Christiana Bardon said in a separate interview. “Many times the Chinese assets are working in new targets that the US may not even be approaching yet. And because the new targets are higher-risk, they convince us with clinical data, which they can access easily.”

To guide its strategy, K2 has brought on Orna Therapeutics Chief Medical Officer Frank Neumann as its CMO. Lilly recently made a deal to [buy MPM-backed Orna](#) and its *in vivo* CAR-T work for up to \$2.4 billion.

K2 has also enlisted former Bristol Myers Squibb medical chief Samit Hirawat as an advisor, Gadicke said. He also recently became a medical advisor to European biotech investor Jeito Capital.

‘The best shot’

Many of MPM’s investment peers have followed a one-off strategy, in which they back separate NewCos with one or more assets.

K2, meanwhile, is looking to build a broad portfolio under one roof, with an ambition of at least half a dozen programs, Gadicke said. Each asset is placed into a K2 subsidiary so that the Chinese company can get an equity stake in that new company, and it will be more favorable for potential M&A exits, the MPM leader said. Pharma companies might be interested in an asset or two, but likely not the entire K2 portfolio.

MPM is pumping more than \$60 million into K2 as part of its “outsized” investment strategy. Its “regular” investments are typically \$20 million to \$60 million per portfolio company, he said.

Oncology will be a key area, but K2 is interested in other large disease areas with major clinical needs, Gadicke said. Beyond ADCs and TCEs, K2 is interested in RNA therapies. RNAi and siRNAs have been the focus of other China-to-West pacts in recent quarters.

Gadicke believes MPM will be an attractive partner for Chinese biotechs given its track record of FDA approvals. The firm’s portfolio companies have secured 60 drug approvals, he said.

“If a Chinese partner compares working with a regular US biotech company or investment firm versus us, they probably should feel safe that they have the best shot at successful drug development by going with us,” Gadicke said.

The firm can go earlier than pharmaceutical giants are willing to go, Gadicke said, with fewer “data demands.” Recognizing the speed and quality of work coming out of China, many of the large pharma players have lined up multiple deals in the region in recent years.

“There may be a very large pharma deal later on that we would then do jointly,” Gadicke said.

If its name is any suggestion, the road ahead might be a hard — but immensely rewarding — trek. K2 is the second-tallest summit in the world, on the border between China and Pakistan. Other companies have held the K2 name before, including what became [Cidara Therapeutics](#). Merck recently acquired the antiviral biotech for \$9.2 billion.

Editor’s note: This story has been corrected to reflect that the Lilly-Orna deal hasn’t yet closed.

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