



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Merck Digital Sciences Studio Opens in Canada to Accelerate Biopharmaceutical Innovation

New accelerator program to support startups with funding, mentorship and technology resources

KIRKLAND, QC., June 20, 2025 – Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, is proud to announce the opening of the Merck Digital Sciences Studio (MDSS) in Montréal, Canada, a collaborative startup accelerator dedicated to investing in, supporting and mentoring biopharmaceutical startups focused on developing cutting-edge digital technologies. The MDSS specifically targets innovations in preventive health, platforms for biologics research and development (R&D) and 3D translational disease models.

Designed for startups incorporated in Québec or Canada and set to commence in July 2025, the six-month acceleration program will provide [seven selected startups](#) with access to mentoring from experts at Merck and Centech. Each selected startup will receive funding through either the Merck Global Health Innovation Fund and the CQDM or Merck Canada. Selected participants will also benefit from tailored guidance, specialized sessions with industry leaders and increased exposure to Merck's decision-makers, paving the way for long-term collaborations.

The selected start-ups that will join the six-month acceleration program in Montréal include¹:

- **Nanofacile** – Accelerating RNA therapy development for biotech, CROs and pharma by offering a first-in-class, intuitive and easy-to-use “Nanomedicine in a Box” technology platform kit.
- **Simmunome** – Building AI validation infrastructure for robust, safe and equitable health care AI algorithms that help enhance the predictability of clinical drug development to prevent late-stage failures.
- **Misochip** – Reducing cancer clinical trial failure rates due to poor efficacy using functional precision medicine for preclinical solutions that allow ex vivo testing on human-relevant tumor models to identify potent drivers of efficacy or resistance.
- **9Bio** – Unlocking the full potential of targeted therapies by guiding antibodies to the right location and accelerating the discovery of conditionally active targeted therapeutics with an integrated methodology.
- **Rime Therapeutics** – Driving precision therapies powered by deep understanding of inflammation biology through a proprietary function-first target and hit discovery platform which unlocks protein-protein interactions (PPIs).

¹ *Note: Access to certain benefits may vary among select start-ups.

- **Stereo Bio** – Addressing cellular heterogeneity in disease with purpose-built multi-specific pMHC-targeting therapeutics, starting with solid tumors.
- **PCare+** – Transforming complex medical guidelines into actionable digital formats using AI by combining large language models (LLMs) with expert systems to extract screening recommendations, scoring systems, and decision logic from guidelines.

The Quebec government has allocated \$900,000 to this initiative through the Quebec Life Sciences Strategy 2022-2025.

“Now more than ever, we need to place a strong focus on collaborative research—it’s how we can develop the future-proof technologies that will keep Québec competitive at home and abroad. Congratulations to Merck, Centech and CQDM on this exciting partnership, which will give seven up-and-coming companies the chance to play a role in advancing new therapeutic solutions,” says Christopher Skeete, Minister for the Economy, Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism and Minister Responsible for the Laval Region.

“We are excited to expand our accelerator footprint globally as more digital health startups continue to drive forward new patient solutions,” said David Rubin, Managing Director at Merck Global Health Innovation Fund. “The role of computational biology is evolving beyond tools like machine learning to newer language learning models and neural networks, and being on the forefront of that evolution across regions has the potential to positively impact drug development for the pharma industry.”

“By fostering a collaborative environment, the MDSS will empower startups to leverage the latest advancements in technology and science,” said David D. Jones, Managing Director of Merck Canada. “We believe that innovation thrives in partnerships, and through this initiative, we aim to create a vibrant ecosystem that accelerates the development of transformative health solutions.”

“The launch of this studio underscores CQDM’s commitment to building high-impact partnerships that accelerate innovation from early-stage discovery to digital transformation,” said Véronique Dugas, CEO of CQDM. “We are proud to collaborate with Merck — a valued partner for over 16 years — on an initiative that leverages Canada’s, and particularly Québec’s, world-class strengths in artificial intelligence and biopharmaceutical research. This partnership reinforces CQDM’s role in advancing life sciences and strengthening Canada’s innovation ecosystem.”

“This partnership with Merck reinforces our commitment to supporting the next generation of deeptech entrepreneurs in Canada,” said Marjorick Foisy, General Director of Centech. “By combining Centech’s expertise in open innovation with Merck’s global leadership in life sciences, the Merck Digital Sciences Studio will help foster breakthrough innovations and strengthen the Canadian digital health ecosystem.”

About Merck Digital Science Studio

The Merck Digital Sciences Studio (MDS Studio, or MDSS) is an accelerator program providing mentorship, coaching, training, support, community, and investment to enable the next generation of innovative technologies for drug discovery and development. We invest in disruptive and innovative startups in digital biopharma via a SAFE (Simple Agreement for Future Equity). The MDS Studio's unique design and network empowers startups to engage with industry leading partners, who take an active role in development. Learn more by visiting www.mds.studio.

About Merck

At Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, we are unified around our purpose: We use the power of leading-edge science to save and improve lives around the world. For more than 130 years, we have brought hope to humanity through the development of important medicines and vaccines. We aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world – and today, we are at the forefront of research to deliver innovative health solutions that advance the prevention and treatment of diseases in people and animals. We foster a diverse and inclusive global workforce and operate responsibly every day to enable a safe, sustainable, and healthy future for all people and communities. For more information about our operations in Canada, visit www.merck.ca and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) @MerckCanada.

About the CQDM

Biopharma Innovation Facilitator

CQDM is a not-for-profit biopharmaceutical research consortium whose mission is to support and facilitate collaborative multi-stakeholder research and development aimed at accelerating the translation or transformation of innovative technologies into solutions to unmet medical needs, while generating significant benefits for the Québec and Canadian economy. For more information, consult our website <https://cqdm.org/en/> and join us on Twitter/X [@CQDM_Canada](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Forward-Looking Statement of Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N.J., USA

This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N.J., USA (the “company”) includes “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company's management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. There can be no guarantees with respect to pipeline candidates that the candidates will receive the necessary regulatory approvals or that they will prove to be commercially successful. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent

in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company's ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company's patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.

The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in the company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2024 and the company's other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC's Internet site (www.sec.gov).

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