Biogen’s recent deal announcement with C4 Therapeutics and Skyhawk Therapeutics will be crucial for Biogen to advance their position in the neuroscience portfolio, particularly in embracing innovative strategies to tackle neurology diseases, says GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

The partnership with the two companies enables Biogen to plug into new market opportunities with the discovery of drugs that have the potential to transform the treatment of neurology diseases. For example, current drugs in the market for diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s mainly offer symptomatic relief. Any drug that is proved to work primarily by targeting disease causing proteins, for instance, α – synuclein in Parkinson’s disease or the amyloid beta protein in Alzheimer’s, holds the potential to halt the progression of the disease. Historical results from such a strategy have not been strong enough to be assigned a breakthrough therapy in diseases such as Alzheimer’s.

However, if C4 Therapeutics’ platform can help with discovery of such a pioneering drug coupled along with Biogen’s resources, then it will represent a huge opportunity for both companies to reap the benefits of a first to market drug with a novel mechanism. Similarly, Skyhawk Therapeutics’ platform holds potential to tackle diseases which have an underlying genetic defect such as spinal muscular atrophy.

Vinie Varkey, MSc, Senior Neurology & Ophthalmology Analyst at GlobalData, comments: “While the vision of both C4 Therapeutics and Skyhawk Therapeutics represent two different directions, it emphasizes Biogen’s intent to form strategic partnerships that will help them to counter multiple threats including those from flattening sales of blockbuster drugs, and from other competitors who are also investing in newer technology platforms for drug discovery with novel mechanisms.”

Biogen’s Spinraza is the only drug currently approved for treatment of patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and gives the company a monopolistic advantage. However, a gene therapy drug from Novartis which is currently filed for review with the US FDA could represent a threat to Biogen’s leadership position in this disease area. In 2017, which was the year when Spinraza was first launched, its worldwide revenue reached USD 884 million.

Varkey concludes: “Strategic partnerships could help Biogen in countering competitive threats, maintain a leadership position in established diseases areas such as multiple sclerosis and lay a stronger foundation in rare disease areas that represent new growth opportunities.”