

25 Years of Impact: How WuXi AppTec is Enabling the Development of Innovative Therapeutics

When Minzhang Chen was working at a pharmaceutical company two decades ago, he first discovered WuXi AppTec. Back then, WuXi AppTec was one of the contract service providers his company used. He could not have anticipated that he would one day be part of WuXi AppTec's history.

"I just liked working with them so much that I joined them," Chen told *BioWorld*.



Minzhang Chen,
co-CEO,
WuXi AppTec

Today, Chen is co-CEO of WuXi AppTec. The company, which started with a laboratory of 7,000 square feet, has grown into a global organization with around 38,000 employees, supporting drug research, development, and manufacturing for clients across the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries.

2025 marks WuXi AppTec's 25th anniversary, so we spoke with Chen about the company's evolution and how its integrated Contract Research, Development, and Manufacturing Organization (CRDMO) model has enabled global pharmaceutical innovation.

An integrated CRDMO

Years ago, many innovator companies kept the manufacturing process in house. Following that model proved to be a repetitive, inefficient investment and a significant burden for smaller organizations. WuXi AppTec was founded to boost efficiency in the drug discovery and development process.

"Our mission is to enable our customers to discover and develop new drugs more efficiently and effectively," Chen said.

At the heart of WuXi AppTec's approach is its integrated CRDMO model. Initially focused on synthetic chemistry services, the company has since expanded its capabilities beyond small molecules to peptides, oligonucleotides, and complex conjugates. Today, WuXi AppTec offers end-to-end support, from early discovery to commercial manufacturing.

This integrated model reduces fragmentation and accelerates timelines. Without it, a customer may need to coordinate with

multiple service providers for each stage of development – adding complexity and risk.

For Chen, WuXi AppTec's model goes well beyond the cliché of having services under one roof.

"True integration," he explained, "means seamless coordination and transparency across project teams, leadership, clients, and all stakeholders – regardless of modality or development stage."

Chen pointed to a recent project involving a complex peptide molecule with challenges in synthesis and formulation. The customer needed a complete CMC package for IND filing in just 11 months. The synthesis route wasn't scalable, and key starting materials were in short supply. "What made the difference was how our teams engaged – not just as suppliers, but as partners who understood the science, the budget, and the urgency."

"Being able to say 'yes' to a project immediately, with the right team, technology and facility in place, is a commitment we take seriously."

**– Minzhang Chen,
co-CEO, WuXi AppTec**

WuXi AppTec's scientists executed starting material and API process development, formulation, analytical, manufacturing, and CMC writing in parallel. The IND was submitted one month ahead of schedule, and the program has since progressed into phase II with promising clinical outcomes.

"It's incredibly rewarding to witness that progress – to see how our team's efforts helped accelerate a potentially life-changing

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therapy,” Chen said. “That’s exactly why we built this platform the way we did: combining scientific expertise, platform capabilities, and integrated execution to turn complexity into meaningful results.”

Capacity that accelerates delivery

In addition to its integrated model, WuXi AppTec’s scale – built steadily over the past 25 years – has been a major driver of what many call “WuXi Speed.”

The company has invested heavily in infrastructure, expanding from a single lab to more than 20 sites worldwide, ensuring it has the physical capacity to launch projects without delay. Because of the scale, WuXi AppTec was able to constantly invest in new technologies and continuously improve facility utilization rate and new technology adoption rate.

But infrastructure is just one part of the equation. “It’s easy to say our strength lies in our CRDMO model or our state-of-the-art facilities and technologies – and that’s true,” said Chen. “But another key strength is our people. They are at the heart of our success. Our teams embrace innovation and adapt quickly to serve our customers.”



May 2025 groundbreaking ceremony for the new spray dried dispersion building at the company’s Couvet, Switzerland, drug product site. Credit: WuXi AppTec.

When Chen joined the company, WuXi AppTec had 100 process chemists. Today, that number exceeds 3,000. “They are very, very knowledgeable, and they’ve continued to improve,” he said.

The vast talent pool allows WuXi AppTec to assign the right team and begin work as soon as a customer is ready, minimizing wait times and accelerating development timelines. “Being able to say ‘yes’ to a project immediately, with the right team, technology and facility in place, is a commitment we take seriously,” Chen added.

A problem solver

This approach positions WuXi AppTec not just as a service provider, but as a problem-solver, and a strategic and trusted partner. According to Chen, the company takes a deliberate, expertise-driven approach to assembling the right pieces at the right time – enabling faster delivery and helping clients reach key milestones with greater efficiency.

Companies such as WuXi AppTec “could help U.S. pharma cut costs by 30% to 60%,” Jeffries analysts said in April.

Over time, these capabilities and capacity have built customer trust. “We step up when our customer needs capacity and when time is sensitive. We make the pharmaceutical supply chain more resilient,” Chen said. In its early years, many clients started with small, simple projects. As WuXi AppTec proved itself, transactions became collaborations, and collaborations evolved into long-term partnerships.

“For many customers, once they started working with us, they stayed,” said Chen. “We’ve worked with some for 25 years. That’s the entire history of WuXi AppTec.”

A global network for global patients

From the beginning, WuXi AppTec has worked toward a single vision: “Every drug can be made, and every disease can be treated.” Today, the company supports around 6,000 customers in more than 30 countries.

“We always say: do the right thing, and do it right,” Chen said. “We want to benefit the industry, benefit our customers, and ultimately, benefit patients.”

WuXi AppTec has contributed to the development and FDA approval of dozens of innovative therapies, including treatments for cancer, diabetes, and rare diseases. Chen believes these therapies have reached millions of patients worldwide.

“Our customers have shared many touching stories with us from patients who said the drugs we helped to make changed their lives,” he said.

The company is committed to continuing that impact. Its operations conform to the highest global quality and regulatory standards, including those from the FDA, EMA, and NMPA, etc. In March 2025, the company’s Changzhou and Taixing API manufacturing sites passed back-to-back FDA inspections without a single observation or Form 483.

The Changzhou site, which supports small molecules, oligonucleotides, peptides, and conjugates, was inspected for 21 FDA-approved products and completed its inspection a day ahead of schedule without a single observation.

WuXi AppTec has also expanded its global footprint over the past decade, investing in facilities across Europe, the United States, and Asia to support clients around the world. For example, the company’s Couvet, Switzerland, site recently doubled its oral

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dose capacity. In the U.S., a new drug product manufacturing facility in Middletown, Del., is set to launch operations before the end of 2026. A new API facility in Singapore is expected to begin operating in 2027.

“Having a global network allows us to provide more options and a more resilient supply chain,” Chen noted.

In 2024, WuXi AppTec supported customers’ commercial products with 100% on-time delivery. Across nearly 30,000 batches, the deviation rate was less than 0.3%.

Looking ahead

Asked about the next 25 years, Chen smiled. “For me, the future is something we build project by project, side by side with our partners,” he said.

It’s clear that WuXi AppTec will continue enabling its customers because its success is directly tied to theirs.

The company will also continue to measure its impact by real-world outcomes: how the therapies it helps develop improve lives.

“You need to look ahead, always forward,” Chen said. “But you also have to do the hard work to make things better every day.



As we often say at WuXi AppTec, to quote Teddy Roosevelt: keep your eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground.”

That mindset – combined with global scale, scientific rigor, and an integrated model – has fueled WuXi AppTec’s growth over the past 25 years. And it’s the foundation for how the company intends to shape the next 25.