

Next big scientific discovery could be made in China



James D. Watson, Nobel laureate for physiology or medicine, talks with China.org.cn. [Photo/China.org.cn]

The next big scientific discovery could be made in China if the country could create a more pro-science environment, according to a visiting American Nobel laureate.

China has many outstanding scientists doing very good work, however, real breakthroughs will only be made if the country can strengthen its universities and research institutes and allow more space for regions to compete with each other, James D. Watson told China.org.cn in an exclusive interview in Beijing on March 29.

“Given the wealth and all the devotion from society, China could be the No.1 or No.2 science nation in the world within the next 50 years if it can spend money wisely, create good institutions and encourage individual science projects.”

The 88-year-old Nobel Prize-winning biologist, credited with the co-discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA, is visiting China on a 10-day trip during which he will talk with the country’s scientists and college students, visit science institutions and attend an international meeting on precision medicine in Shenzhen.

The greatest strength for the world’s most populous nation on which it can draw is its people, said Dr. Watson who is also the principal science

consultant with the CheerLand Investment Group.

He also stressed the importance of building a stable structure that puts the best people in the top position.

Scientific strength in the United States comes from competition among states, because central planning is not always the best way to make good decisions. He said that suggesting money expenditure in R&D should be decentralized so that individual regions could have some real power to engage in competition which is the key to driving innovation.

The most important purpose for Watson's China trip is to promote the launch of "The Watson Bioscience Center", with an emphasis on cancer treatment.

By launching a world-class center on precision medicine, China now has an opportunity to make strides in the field and make cancer treatment widely available and affordable, he stressed.