Ep Vantage brings you notable deals you may have missed over the Christmas period.

December 24

Acura Pharmaceuticals got a bit of a boost when King Pharmaceuticals announced that it would be exercising its right to license a fourth immediate release opioid-based pain drug using Acura's tamper-proof Aversion Technology, triggering a payment of $3m to Acura and a 14% rise in the share price. King's move looks like a response to the decision earlier this month by the FDA to issue a complete response letter to its and partner Pain Pharmaceuticals' drug Remoxy, which was developed to be a tamper-proof version of oxycodone.

Otsuka Pharmaceutical extended its global reach with the acquisition of the outstanding shares of Nardobel, a subsidiary of French company Nutrition & Sante. Nardobel produces health and functional foods. Earlier this year Otsuka bought a 49% stake in French mineral water maker, Alma, giving it a sales network in Europe.

December 25

Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma's plans to turn itself into a major player in the Japanese generics market took a step further when the company announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, Tanabe Seiyaku Hanbai, would be merging with Choseido Pharmaceutical's subsidiary, Chosei Yakuhin. The acquisition is expected to complete in April.

December 26

Japan’s Sosei will buy back commercialization rights to pain drug AD 923 from Mundipharma for £2m. As a result, Sosei said it now expects a wider loss in fiscal 2008. The drug has suffered significant setbacks this year and was withdrawn from European phase III trials in March, due to problems with a component in the delivery device for the fentanyl spray. By reacquiring the European and rest of world rights Sosei now has the opportunity to offer a future licensing partner global rights to the drug.

December 29

Privately-owned AlphaVax was the beneficiary of a $20m upfront payment following the signing of an agreement with Novartis for its phase I cytomegalovirus to prevent birth defects in newborns, which could also include a potential $4m equity investment. The deal also gives Novartis first negotiation rights to AlphaVax's preclinical respiratory syncytial virus programme.

December 30

After months of wrangling King Pharmaceuticals finally completed its $1.6bn takeover of Alpharma. King had originally approached Alpharma with a $1.4bn offer back in August that was rejected as being too low, before coming back in November with its sweetened offer of $37 a share. The combined companies will create a powerhouse in the field of pain drugs.

Actavis acquired King Pharmaceuticals' pain relief drug Kadian, as part of one of the conditions laid down by the Federal Trade Commission to ensure the completion the Alpharma acquisition. The disposal was to ensure that there was still competition between the sellers of long-acting oral opioid pain drugs. Actavis will pay up to $127.5m for the drug depending on how well it sells over the next 18 months.

Shares in Synta Pharmaceuticals rose 18% after announcing it had entered into a collaboration with Roche on December 23 to develop and market the group’s calcium release-activated calcium (CRAC) channel modulators for the treatment of inflammatory diseases. Synta will bank $25m in upfront fees and up to $1bn in milestone payments and royalties for three products. The group also retains the right to co-promote the drugs in indications other than rheumatoid arthritis in the US at Roche’s expense.