

"There's always the risk that the drug falls at the final hurdle and ends up being worth nothing at all, but then that's a fundamental part of the pharmaceutical industry."

Hyett concluded: "The risk of failure probably goes a long way to explaining why Astra have decided to fund the deal with an equity raise rather than debt, there's no obligation to pay shareholders if things don't work out as expected, whereas lenders demand their pound of flesh regardless."

"Ultimately this is a relatively high-risk roll of the dice, only time will tell whether it it's a stroke of genius or leaves shareholders nursing a hangover."

In late morning trading in London, AstraZeneca shares were 5.3% lower at 6,150p.

-- Adds analyst comment, share price --

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