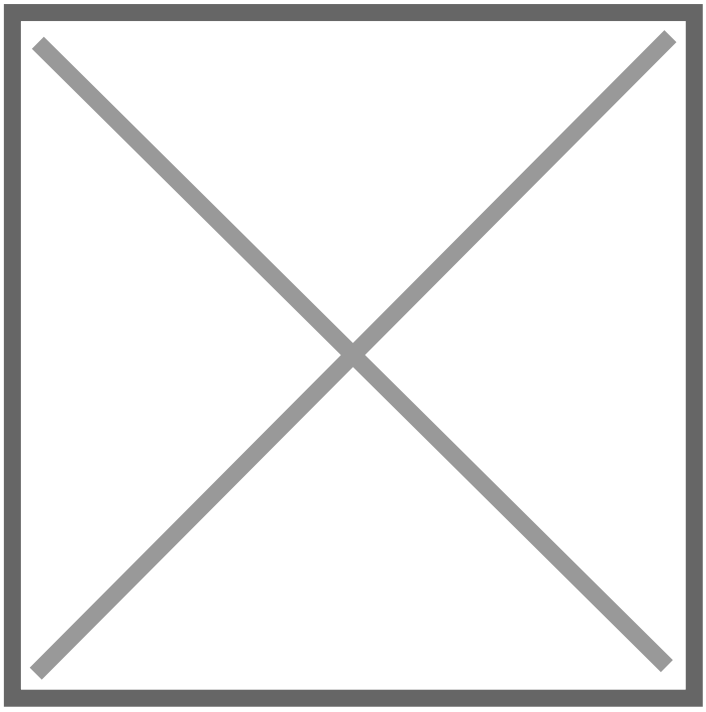
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PM: More investment in R&D needed

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On the occasion of 99th annual session of the Indian Science Congress in Bhubaneshwar, the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, emphasized the need for increasing public-private partnerships and catalyzing increased interaction between publicly owned science and technology institutions, and the industry. Recognizing the various problems plaguing the research community such as lack of employment opportunities, especially for women scientists, Dr Manmohan Singh pointed out that a recent survey revealed that 60 percent of nearly 2,000 Indian women PhDs in science were unemployed for lack of job opportunities.

Slugrd

Dr Singh also highlighted that public investment in R&D has been growing at 20-to-25 percent every year during the 11th Five Year Plan period (2007-12). Over the last few years, the number of scientific publications by Indian scientists working in India increased at more than 12 percent per annum as compared to the global average of four percent. India has moved from 15th rank in 2003 to ninth rank in 2010, with respect to the number of publications in peer-valued journals. Dr Singh notably singled out the pharmaceutical industry for creating a world-class hub for advanced technology. He further implored other industries to emulate that example. He also called for greater investment in R&D, including funding by the industry and other strategic sectors. The total R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is expected to be at least two percent by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan period, from the current level of about one percent. He pointed out that this could only be achieved if the industry, which contributes about one-third of the total R&D expenditure, increases its contribution significantly.

Orchid Pharma completes phase I study

Chennai-based global pharma major, Orchid Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals, successfully completed phase I trial of its orally administered PDE4 (phosphodiesterase 4 inhibitor) molecule OCID 2987 positioned for the treatment of inflammatory disorders, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, in Europe. It was found that OCID 2987 is well-tolerated up to the highest doses administered in both single and repeat dose studies and did not demonstrate a potential for nausea or emesis, a common unacceptable side-effect with most PDE4 inhibitors. There were no serious adverse events or any cardiac safety concerns reported in the study. Orchid's drug discovery efforts are conducted through its wholly-owned subsidiary Orchid Research Laboratories.

Artemisia annua trials get nod

Jamia Hamdard University received go-ahead from the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) to conduct event selection trials on Artemisia annua L (sweet worm) transgenic lines. The same has been developed in an institute-industry collaborative research project sponsored by the DST-DPRP, by IPCA, Mumbai, and Faculty of Science, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi. With respect to IPCA Labs, the GEAC has recommended constitution of Institutional Biosafety committee (IBSC) and resubmission of the application subsequent to receipt of minutes of the IBSC meeting.

Online research funding procedure

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) put in place a new revised procedure for processing extramural research projects. The revised procedure, which has come into effect since Jan 01, 2012, makes it mandatory for investigators to

submit a concept note to describe the justification and objectives of the study, expected outcomes, benefits, proposed methodology, duration of the project and tentative budget. The investigators may look into the thrust areas of research of the council, which are based on national needs and are available on the ICMR website, while preparing the concept note.

After receiving the concept note, which can be submitted during any time of the year, an acknowledgment will be issued that will have an unique identification number (Id No). The procedure requires all future correspondence and sanctions to have this number. The concept proposals received within two months blocks or on deadline would be scrutinized and evaluated by the council within a fixed time period. Decision would be communicated to investigators for both selected and non selected proposals.

Only the principal investigators (PIs) of the selected concept notes would be asked to expand their proposal into detailed project in the format of the ICMR adhoc projects within a period of not more than two months and submit to the council online. The detailed project will also be evaluated by the council within a fixed time and decision.