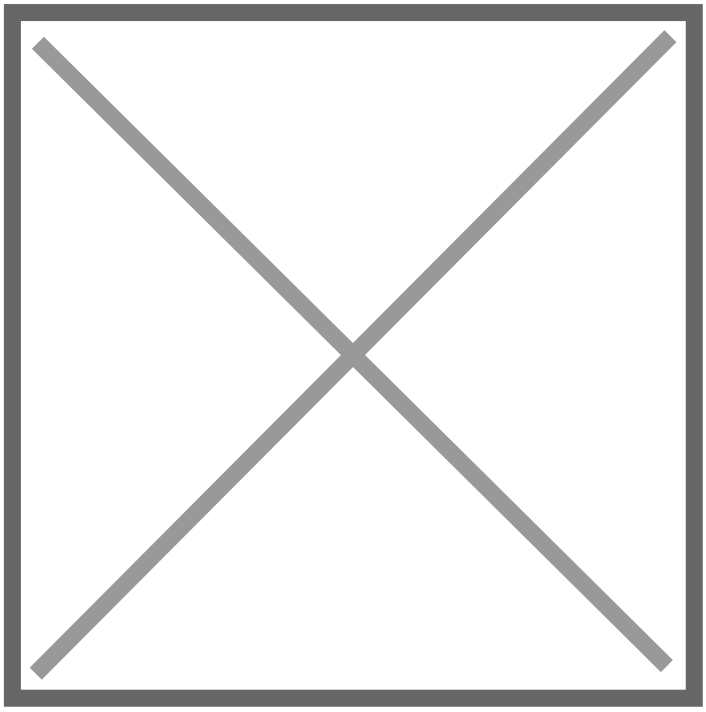
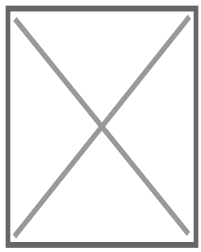


On the biosimilars mission

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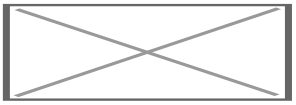
Dr Cyrus Karkaria
president, biotech division, Lupin Pharma India

Dr Cyrus Karkaria, president, biotech division, Lupin Pharma India, has brought on board a wealth of knowledge and expertise in drug development and commercialization from his past experience in the US. He hopes to replicate the same success in Lupin's biotech endeavours.

Lupin Pharma, which boasts of an illustrious history in the field of small molecules, is determined to etch a mark in the global biosimilar space. The biotech team headed by Dr Cyrus Karkaria, president, biotech, Lupin India, has left no stone unturned in translating this vision into a reality. Dr Karkaria is highly optimistic, while giving his observations on the Indian biotechnology industry. Ã¢â?¬Å?I am excited to be in India. The global market for biosimilars is $120 billion and emerging markets contribute to about one-fifth of that market. Out of that, around 10 percent is India's contribution. So India's contribution by 2015 is going to be $2 billion and this is huge.Ã¢â?¬?

Having completed his Masters in Biochemistry from the University of Mumbai, in 1984, he left for the US to pursue his PhD in biochemistry from the University of Maryland and subsequently did his post doctoral fellowship from the Harvard Medical School. In 1992, he went on to work for a start-up company, Scios, which gave him a good footing in biotechnology research. Having worked for two years there, he went on to join another start-up company that looked into protein chemistry.

He later joined Biogen Idec, which was the high-point in his career. For eight years, he was part of drug development and commercialization of the company's various products, like its multiple sclerosis product Avonex, which went on to become a blockbuster drug. He also looked into the commercialization of other multi-billion dollar drugs like Amevive and Tysabri. Ã¢â?¬Å?I have achieved many accomplishments in the past, in terms of publications and patents, but the achievement of being part of the team that commercialized a drug called Avonex has been a major milestone for me,Ã¢â?¬? he says.



Following this, Dr Karkaria joined a genomics-based company before choosing to come back to India in 2010 and joining Lupin Pharma. Ã¢â?¬Å?I felt that it was the perfect time to come back. The biotechnology industry in India is in a nascent state and the forecast is that it is bound to grow fast in the coming years. I want to be a part of the India growth story.Ã¢â?¬?

On joining Lupin, Dr Karkaria was given a straight forward plan by the management to replicate their success in the small molecules generics space in biotechnology. Ã¢â?¬Å?My core mandate here is to develop biosimilars for the developed markets. We are constantly evaluating opportunities and are looking at new biological entities (NBEs) and biobetters,Ã¢â?¬? he adds.

Lupin's first biological product for oncology will be commercialized this year. The team expects this product to contribute five percent of its global revenues by 2015. Ã¢â?¬Å?We have finished the trials and now it is a question of filing reports and getting the marketing team organized,Ã¢â?¬? he informs. Ã¢â?¬Å?Our strategy is straightforward. We want to commercialize a particular set of biosimilars for select markets and after that we will look at biobetters or even NBEs. Our main priority now is to focus on biosimilars,Ã¢â?¬? he says.

India is going through exciting times, he adds. Given its present strength, it is bound to lead in the global landscape in the coming years. Ã¢â?¬Å?India has strong points to take the lead. I see that a lot of individuals are coming back to India and setting up small start-up companies. The trend is bound to catch up in the next 10 years. Moreover, the Department of Biotechnology has been very proactive in providing funds to small biotech companies,Ã¢â?¬? he concludes. This can go a long way in adding to India's innovation story.

Nayantara Som in Mumbai