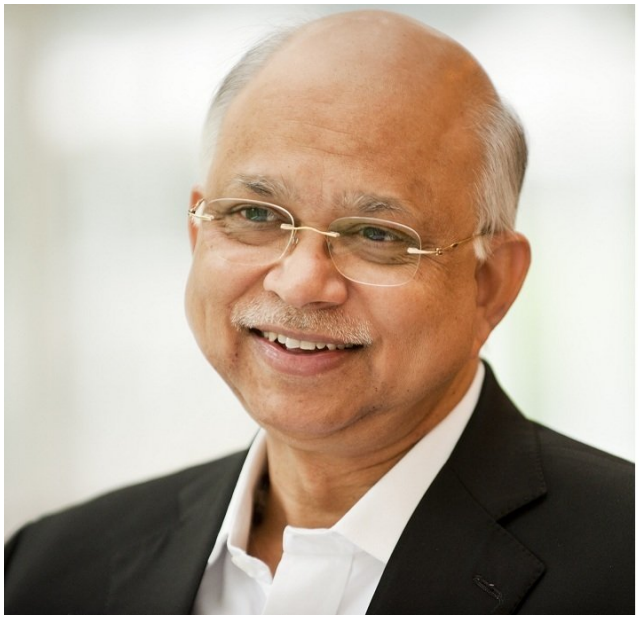
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"Collaboration could accelerate innovation in bio pharma sector"

12 June 2020 | Views

KG Ananthakrishnan, Director General, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), Mumbai talk about the impact of COVID-19 on India



What are the major plans at OPPI to tackle the covid-19 pandemic?

We believe that the research-based pharmaceutical industry clearly has a role to play in developing new and improved medicines and vaccines to help respond to this epidemic and we have been working collectively towards this end. OPPI represents the research-based pharmaceutical industry in the country. From the outset of the epidemic, our member companies are pushing the boundaries of science, developing workable solutions and ensuring there is capacity to scale up manufacture once solutions are found, while at the same time ensuring continuity of global supply for critical products.

Keeping the patient at the centre of all that we do, OPPI members remain committed towards working with Government, medical institutions and other stakeholders, in delivering quality patient care during these challenging times.

While the COVID 19 situation has tested us in every possible manner. Our biggest learning has been Collaboration. Working as one industry, and continuing to fight Corona as one nation, we deeply appreciate the swift & responsive action of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, PMO, DCGI, MoHFW, State Governments, police and other enforcement agencies, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Civil Aviation and many others, in their whole-hearted support in helping us manage the COVID situation. We remain committed to our patients and strive to ensure the continued supply of essential supplies for medicines and vaccines, for patients that suffer from chronic illnesses or other health conditions

The government looks to be pushing local manufacturing of pharmaceutical ingredients. What is your take on this? What challenges lie ahead?

India is called the Pharmacy to the World. And we believe that initiatives such as Innovate in India, Make in India and Collaborate in India will strengthen the industry further. A high growth potential; a strong chemistry -led background; cost competitive manufacturing base,a young, skilled and talented workforce; and an enabling policy & regulatory environment these factors lend themselves in making India an attractive manufacturing destination..

Further, India has the opportunity to develop state of the art pharma parks, with a focus on API/ KSMs. For this, we require expedited environmental clearances; shared infrastructure for utilities and a keen focus to harmonize standards with PIC/S; explore automation and digitization of operations, provide adequate financial incentives and subsidies on the overall production value of key APIs, land, utilities and labor;.

India can leverage its strength in Manufacturing and Science & Technology capabilities. India can be primed to be the hub for research, innovation and shared services; and an integral partner of global R&D chain. Today, more than ever, there is a pressing need for industry, Government, academia, and start-ups to come together to create innovation hubs in the country where research can be undertaken. This can happen when we create a strong IP and regulatory ecosystem with a heightened

focus on digital innovation, biotechnology, and thrust on R&D partnership models.

How can India be developed into a global pharma hub?

India has the capability, capacity, and the talent pool required to become a powerhouse of innovation. In India, the Science & Technology innovation ecosystem is being supported by forward looking initiatives of Government of India such as: Startup India, Make In India, Digital India initiative etc. According to the Global Innovation Index 2019, India is the 52nd most innovative country in the world.

The role of innovation is to make us think of the future and help fill in the gaps. It is imperative that there be more than one hub of innovation that would support healthcare response of the future. Well-funded and government backed hubs, leading academia and innovation driven private enterprise along with a well-defined policy framework including IP protection will go a long way in creating these centres of excellence. Appropriate system of rewards, recognition and remuneration will be crucial to attract the finest minds in India and abroad to be a part of this eco-system.

In the past PPP model has played a crucial part in solving large scale challenges. The collaboration between government, academia and industry for the development of such a hub could accelerate innovation in bio pharmaceutical sector.

The future is all about innovation. In the bio-pharmaceutical industry, innovation promotes development of new diagnostic tools, treatments and cures to address unmet medical needs. Let's remain steadfast in our commitment to research and development in healthcare that will allow patients to enjoy a better quality of life.

The COVID 19 crisis can be the turning point for India to emerge as one of the finest bio-pharmaceutical hubs.