

Industry focuses on expanding canvas of vaccine preventable diseases

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A panel discussion by public health experts at FICCI HEAL 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the rise of vaccines as the most potent and promising weapon a country can possess to face the challenge. The elaborate vaccination drive in India has been successful yet it seems almost impossible to vaccinate the entire adult populace by year 2021.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) jointly with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and NITI Aayog is organizing a three-day 'Heal 2021-Transforming Healthcare beyond COVID-19' from 20-22 October, 2021 virtually. To shed light on the present vaccination scenario in India, a panel discussion was held on 2nd October, 2021 on 'COVID-19 vaccination: The current and future scenarios.'

Professor YK Gupta, Principal advisor- Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, and Principal Advisor, India Strategy Development, The Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP), Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDI); President AIIMS – Bhopal & Jammu put forward his concerns and ideas regarding adult vaccination, future threats like antimicrobial resistance and collaboration between regulatory bodies, "This is the stage where vaccinology has provided a challenge which we have successfully handled and has opened so much collaboration between industry and academia. Can we think of ten more vaccines and increase the canvas of vaccine preventable diseases? We

have developed vaccine for corona but we are yet to adopt vaccines in our daily life. We used to teach preventive medicine but now it's time to practice it.”

Dr Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director, Bharat Biotech gave his recommendations on how industry should move forward in vaccine technology and development, “We are ahead of the game over any other field in the country. We are not looking like a generic vaccine company; we are looking to change the Indian ecosystem in innovation. We are looking if vaccines can prevent antimicrobial resistance.”

Sharing his ideas, Samir Desai, President and Head BU Biologics, Cadila Healthcare said, “Developing vaccines is a challenge, but manufacturing, distributing and getting vaccines into arms is yet another different challenge. Partnerships with academic institutes is what brings breakthrough ideas and the it is the industry’s duty to help translate it.”

Sarthak Ranade, Managing Director, Johnson & Johnson India spoke on partnerships and the market scenario in India, “India has always been known for its strengths in the generic and vaccine space. The excellent facilitation during the pandemic has to continue and the agility and flexibility of regulators is required. When it comes to adult vaccination a lot of awareness is required. It starts with something as primitive as spreading awareness regarding how vaccines can prevent disease.”

“There has been a level of collaboration between industries that has never been seen before across nations, across bodies with stakeholders coming together and seamless sharing of data. But there are lessons to be learned and how it could have been managed better”, pointed out Smriti Mishra, Advisor- Lifesciences, EY.

The quick response in developing a vaccine against coronavirus has shown that industries in India are poised at the precipice of great advancements in vaccine research which may potentially counteract preventable diseases and save lives.