

Ocimum Biosolutions Ltd.

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Hyderabad-based Ocimum Biosolutions is a BioIT and contract research and development company with competencies in LIMS, bioinformatics, genomics tools and custom contract research services, with operations in the US and India with support from partners in Europe and Canada. Besides customers in India, Ocimum has over 100 customers across the world. Besides pharma and agricultural organizations, Ocimum serves biological and non-biological research organizations, individuals and organizations working in the area of Microarrays.

The BioIT division of Ocimum Biosolutions specializes in ready-to-use reliable, cost-effective software solutions for the biotech and pharma industry with a suite of LIMS and bioinformatics products such as Biotracker, Toxchek, Pharmatracker, Genchek, OptGene, Nutrabase, Genowiz and iRNAchek. With the acquisition of the Microarray division of MWG Biotech, Germany, in 2004, Ocimum launched a whole suite of microarray products. "These include Catalog OciChips, Custom OciChips and hybridization services. With this acquisition, Ocimum offers a complete microarray portfolio for academic and industry customers," said Anuradha Acharya, CEO, Ocimum.

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ReaMetrix

ReaMetrix is a company founded by successful serial entrepreneur Bala S Manian to leverage the Indo-US corridor. It has a different business model. "What we are saying to our customers is that we would be totally transparent about what our costs are. Your skin in the game is that you pay for our incremental costs, not for our capital costs, which we have already sunk in. But we want a share of the value that we are creating. For every project we are doing we either get a share of the revenue on an ongoing basis or we get certain rights to the technology that we can then monetize for other applications," said Manian, director, ReaMetrix.

The company has announced a critical diagnostic product for managing HIV patients, Accuford TriTStat. The product has been developed keeping in mind the local conditions and affordability in mind. The product is expected to create a revolution in managing HIV patients by bringing down the cost of tests by a factor of five. Next in line is an alternative to viral load, a molecular biology test that today requires PCR and complex instrumentation, control conditions. "We are trying to find an alternative approach to provide the same clinical information so that the combination of Tri-TStat plus the viral load allows us to meet the cost rules set by the Davos conference in 2005 in Switzerland where they said we would like the testing burden, part of the test (two tests a year) should be in the \$50-\$60 range," informed Manian.

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Syngene International

A subsidiary of Biocon, Syngene offers customized R&D services to the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors in early stage drug discovery and development. It was one of the first CRO companies in India. It has two divisions - molecular biology and synthetic chemistry. The molecular biology division has developed a strong infrastructure and expertise to handle alkyl lithiums, air and moisture sensitive reagents, reactions under inert conditions and metal mediated reactions.

The contract research services from Syngene and Clinigene, another Biocon subsidiary have registered a 35 percent growth over Q1 FY-2005. Syngene has procured new research contracts from both existing and new customers, which will translate into incremental revenues for this fiscal. Its clients include 6 of the top 10 global pharma majors.

Dr Gautam Das
Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, CMD, Biocon Ltd, said, "The outlook for the year ahead remains positive. New research contracts both at Syngene and Clinigene will deliver additional growth. The new capacities that will come on stream in the latter half of this fiscal will also contribute to overall growth." Syngene was awarded the Certificate of Excellence for Export Achievement by the Government of India, for two consecutive years 2002-2003.

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SIRO Clinpharm Pvt Ltd

Siro Clinpharm Pvt Ltd, one of the earliest entrants in the contract clinical research business in India having commenced operations in 1996, has steadily built its reputation as a specialist in late stage clinical development solutions. With 5,000 subjects recruited in 45 studies across a wide spectrum of therapeutic indications, SIRO has grown organically, gradually building capabilities in all areas of Phase II, III and IV clinical trials.

Under the leadership of Dr Gautam Daftary, who has over 20 years of experience in pharmaceutical management, SIRO is

supported by a global advisory board that has been instrumental in structuring the company into the leading contract research organizations in India. According to Dr Chetan Tamhankar, general manager, SIRO Clinpharm, the company has entered into tie-up with Pfizer Global Research and Development, through its affiliate in India to cover the provision of clinical data management and biometrics services.

SIRO has entered into strategic partnership with Spacelabs Medical Data. "Through this alliance, SIRO will offer centralized cardiac safety monitoring services including centralized ECG, Holter and Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring services to any of the clinical studies that it manages in India," added Tamhankar. Besides, with Covance Inc. of Princeton, New Jersey, SIRO has been offering pharma development services in India in support of the domestic and international biopharmaceutical industry.

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Strand Life Sciences

Strand Life Sciences, formerly Strand Genomics, is a premier in silico technologies innovation company. It is focused on developing technologies for drug discovery and development. Strand has three streams of business spanning early target discovery through pre-clinical development. The first is centered on informatics tools and solutions for the research biologist with a focus on visualization and analytics for array technologies and including oligo design, image analysis and information management systems. A second stream of products include a cheminformatics modeling platform Admetis and proprietary in silico predictive models for small molecule drug properties like ADME and cardiotoxicity with models for hepatotoxicity in the pipeline. Strand also partners with discovery contract research companies to combine in silico and wet labs to offer services starting from compound library design to lead generation.

Strand leverages its core strengths in data mining, predictive modeling, computational chemistry, software engineering and research biology to develop technologies and products for research biology and drug discovery.

In December 2005, Strand struck a strategic partnership with the US-based Stratagene Corporation to develop a suite of next generation bioinformatics software tools. Both the companies will collaborate on the design and development of innovative software tools to address the increasingly complex demands of biological data analysis for life scientists. The company has also entered into a research collaboration with Elan Pharmaceuticals aimed towards supporting Elan's drug discovery efforts.

Strand's award winning Avadis software application has recently achieved GeneChip-compatible status with the Affymetrix Inc. GeneChip microarray platform and has joined the Affymetrix GeneChip-compatible Applications Program, which provides customers with a broad spectrum of software solutions for biomedical research and development.

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Triesta Sciences

Triesta Sciences is a privately owned clinical genomics company based in Menlo Park, CA and Bangalore, India. It was founded in early 2002 by a group of US-based clinicians and scientists of Indian origin. The company leverages the Indian clinical substrate to address a key research bottleneck; the clinical validation of genomics derived products of therapeutic and diagnostic utility. Triesta undertakes clinical and molecular evaluation and validation of new targets and markers in partnership with international diagnostics and pharmaceutical companies. The company has disease programs in the areas of oncology, infectious diseases, gastrointestinal disorders and renal disease. Its current programs include: retrospective studies to evaluate tissue molecular markers of drug response in breast cancers; and prospective studies to evaluate markers of disease staging and drug response in colorectal and breast cancers. Triesta has established integrated clinical research and molecular analysis capabilities in India to undertake the end-to-end clinical validation of novel RNA, DNA or protein based targets and markers. The company entered into a strategic alliance with Molecular Connections in the area of

biomarker discovery and validation in 2003. As a part of the alliance, Molecular Connections will provide its advanced information extraction, informatics and pathway analysis expertise for Triesta Sciences' biomarker discovery program.

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XCyton Diagnostics

Bangalore-based XCyton Diagnostics Ltd was started in 1993 with a mission to develop, manufacture and market diagnostic kits for infectious diseases. The company developed the country's first indigenous kit to detect antibodies to HIV 1 and 2 called HIV-CheX.

It introduced its second product, a detection kit for a parasite, neurocysticercosis, in the brain in the year 2000, called CYSTI-CheX. The third product, HEPCheX, a Hepatitis detection kit, was launched in 2001. And in 2004, it launched JEVCheX a detection kit for Japanese Encephalitis.

A prominent diagnostic player, the kits developed by XCyton are in the list of kits approved for usage in blood banks by the Drug Controller General of India. Its HIV-CheX kit is in the bulk purchase list of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is purchased by WHO.

For developing new technologies and products, it has strong technical collaborations with premier institutes in India such as IISc, Bangalore, NIMHANS, Bangalore, ICGEB, Delhi, TRC Chennai, AIIMS, New Delhi, DRDE, Gwalior, Vipra Inc. USA.

According to Dr B Ravi Kumar, managing director, XCyton, the company is working on developing a dengue kit, vision chip, a chip for detecting the infection of the eye, and spot tests for HIV, HCV, etc.

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Virchow Biotech (P) Ltd

Virchow Biotech (P) Ltd, one of the group companies of the Virchow group of companies has received the green signal from the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) to conduct clinical trials with VIRKINASE - a recombinant Streptokinase that it has developed indigenously. The company proposes to conduct a multi-centric randomized double-blind study in a total number of 75-100 subjects aged between 18-75 years with acute myocardial infarction fulfilling the eligibility criteria. The clinical trials will be conducted at five CARE Hospitals in Hyderabad. It has already out-licensed its first product, Recombinant Human Platelet Derived Growth Factor (rhPDGF) to Dr Reddy's Labs, which is marketing it under the brand Plermin, prescribed for diabetic foot ulcer.

Virchow Biotech has been working on 10 new products, mostly recombinant products. Besides doing research, it is in the process of setting up a manufacturing facility for rDNA biopharmaceuticals. Of the four patents filed so far, Virchow Biotech has received one patent approval.

It has launched 'Bioflora', a product indicated for the prevention of diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome, antibiotic associated diarrhoea, diarrhoea during enteral feeding, traveller's diarrhoea. Virchow Biotech is also to launch 'Hyopt', a viscoelastic product to aid cataract surgeries. It can be useful in intra and extra capsular cataract extraction, IOL implantation, corneal transplantation. Being a naturally occurring polysaccharide, Sodium Hyaluronate present in Hyopt has no serious side effects except for a transient rise in intra-ocular pressure. It is supplied in dispensable pre-filled syringes as a sterile viscous liquid for single patient use.

"We have pipeline of products. We hope growth in biotechnology is promising and will grow with growth of the biotechnology industry," said Dr Hemanth Nandigala, executive director - commercials, Virchow Biotech Pvt Ltd.

Virchow Biotech is a part of the pharmaceutical group company - Virchow group of companies that also focuses on biotechnology. The group has a US FDA approved unit in Jeedimetla (Hyderabad) that manufactures Sulfamethaxazole.

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