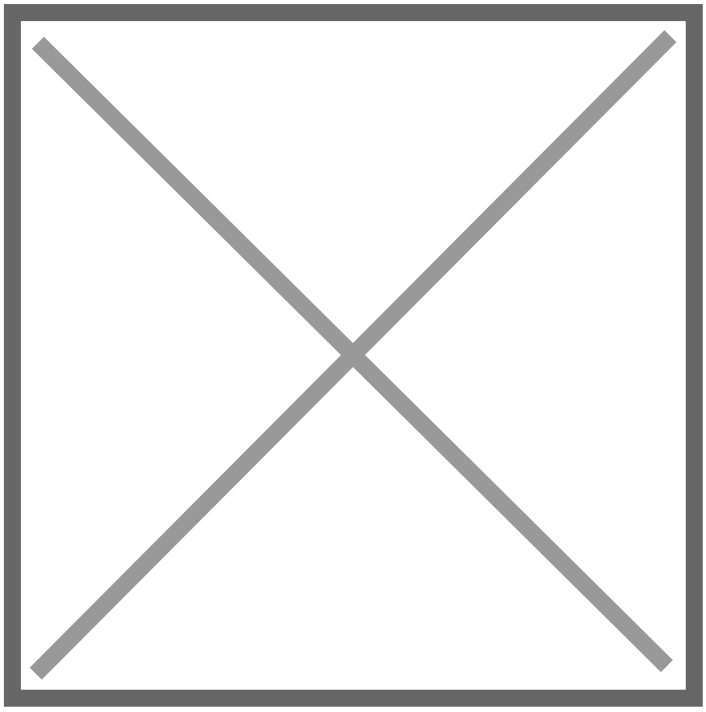
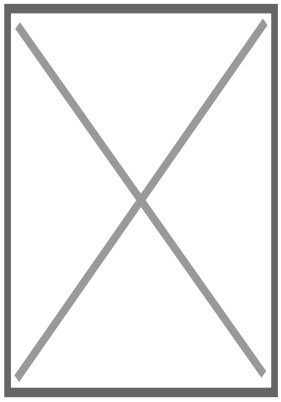
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"Market for clinical trials in India has big potential "

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"Market for clinical trials in India has big potential "

Sanjiv Khaturia, director, sales and marketing, TNT India Private Limited.

When did TNT start its clinical express services in India?

We picked up the first blood sample may be six years ago in India but we really did not realize the market potential then. We used to operate this business from our Singapore office as it used to get the contracts and we used to just do the pick-ups. That is how it started. Only a couple of years back we realized the market potential and the need to expand our capabilities and resources to meet the requirements of the industry here. In the last two years we have done a lot of work and come a long way by developing capabilities in this space. Today we have improved our capabilities by understanding the local terrain and the regulatory issues in this space to cater to the needs of the customers. Our USP lies in packaging, coverage/good network of distributors (17 pick-up points across the country), contact with airlines and end-to-end service (import, re-distribution in India, pick-ups and export).

What are the services you offer to life sciences/biotechnology companies?

Globally we are into four areas as far as life sciences and pharmaceutical verticals are concerned. The first one is clinical trials - a happening area, and we transport samples like urine, blood and plasma. The second one is supplying diagnostic samples not directly linked to clinical trials. The third one is carrying medical equipment like pace makers. We also supply reagents necessary for these medical equipment. These are the four areas we are into. It is called the express industry where movement of material is time bound and time is a critical factor. The other part is movement of drugs and formulations. We

also take up such services which come under a separate division called logistics.

Of these these three areas Ã¢â?¬â?? diagnostics, clinical trials and medical equipment, which do you think has a potential for growth in India?

Clinical trials is a big potential market at present. However, the diagnostic sector will grow and it is now getting organized. Companies like SRL Ranbaxy, Dr Lal's Labs and Metropolis are leading in the sector. But I personally believe that the diagnostics business is still fragmented and needs to be organized much more. In the area of clinical trials, India has a clear advantage of skilled, medical and scientific manpower, language, medical facility or genetic pool and is certainly well positioned in this space. We will definitely move ahead in this sector. I do not know the exact market in next five years for clinical research although different reports have different figures. I can only say that it will certainly be a large market and will grow.

Do you have a dedicated team for clinical express services?

We are a large business group. Therefore there are certain areas that are integrated and each division of the group will leverage on each other's network. However, we have a dedicated team of 25 persons focusing only on the operations and customer services of clinical express products. Other services such as pick-up and delivery is taken care of by other divisions also.

What is the growth rate you are looking at for clinical express services in India?

The percentage at present has no meaning. This is because we are starting from a small base compared to our total service. I can say we will grow by 400 percent this year in life sciences and that is mainly coming from clinical trials. We are investing in terms of resources such as manpower, training, infrastructure, more robust SOPs and in better packaging. We are getting ready for the upcoming market.

How you see the competition in clinical express market in India?

I see competition only from World Courier, which started offering its services in clinical trials quite earlier and from Marken. There are few others like DHL. But their presence is not felt much in the Indian market. But we are giving a tough fight to World Courier.

Narayan Kulkarni

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