

“India has shown great interest in advancing the science of stem cell biology”

08 April 2009 | News



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image not found or type unknown Research Biotechnology Business, Sigma Aldrich
Sigma Aldrich, the US based life science and high technology company, has recently announced the launch of an online web portal that provides researchers with immediate access to its extensive portfolio of over 1,100 industry-leading products developed specifically for advanced stem cell research. In addition, a team of regenerative medicine experts has been retained to identify and develop new and promising technologies in this growing area. This comes in the wake of lifting of the ban on stem cell research and companies showing willingness to realize their potential in the area. In an interview with David Smoller, president, Sigma Aldrich, we find out more.

Sigma's division of regenerative medicine has been set up recently? Elaborate on the plans of the division?

The regenerative medicine program within the research biotech division of Sigma-Aldrich was established in January, 2009. The mission of the regenerative medicine program is to provide a portal for the stem cell research community to access Sigma-Aldrich's broad portfolio of life science products and services. Now these scientists have a single location to research and source the products they need to carry out their research. Further, the regenerative team will help to develop new products and services to overcome the limitations of existing products available to stem cell researchers.

What are the new products launched by Sigma Aldrich for stem cell research?

To date, the products launched by Sigma Aldrich include an expanded line of research antibodies useful for understanding genes that play a role in stem cell self-renewal and differentiation, and a new line of 3D scaffolds for growing stem cells in an environment that mimics in-vivo conditions. This year, the regenerative medicine group plans to launch many more cutting-

edge products.

Is this on the backdrop of the recent lifting of federal restriction on stem cell research? How is it going to impact the business of companies such as yours in the US?

The impact from the lifting of federal restrictions is difficult to measure because privately financed stem cell research continues to play a significant role. We believe that the \$10 billion of economic stimulus funding targeted at the NIH will have a significant impact in terms of stem cell research; this stimulus will increase available money for existing and new stem cell researchers to conduct more experiments.

How do you see the stem cell research in India vis-a-vis the US?

Since the creation of the task force on “Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine” in 2003, and the opening of the Manipal Institute of Regenerative Medicine in 2007, India has shown great interest and capability in advancing the science of stem cell biology, not only in basic research but also in the development of potentially lifesaving therapies. For research in any country the key issues are the availability of funding and the availability of a talented pool of scientists, and on both these counts we believe India is primed to lead.

How do you view competition from other players in this segment and how do you differentiate yourself?

Our competition also sees the opportunity in providing life sciences tools to stem cell scientists. It is our opinion that Sigma Aldrich’s efforts at developing new research tools along with our competitors will only benefit stem cell researchers. In this competitive market, we will differentiate ourselves by providing new technologies that address the limitations our customers face today, and by providing streamlined access to our products so that researchers can easily find what they need.

What is the marketing strategy for the products? How much revenues do you hope to generate and how much are they going to contribute to the company’s gross revenue?

We don’t typically comment on revenue projections within Sigma Aldrich divisions. However, we do expect this research market to grow at double digit rates year over year. Our strategy consists of several elements like aggressive launch of new products, expanding technical resources available to our customers, strengthening our presence in the stem cell research community, and continue to collaborate with leading stem cell research institutions in India and other nations.

What are the future plans of the research biotech division of Sigma Aldrich?

The research biotech division of Sigma Aldrich will continue to invest in capital and people to ensure our service to this and other growing markets. Further, as we always have done, we will acquire the necessary technologies and product content to address the future needs of our customers.

Stem cell lines

The portal’s expanding line of cutting-edge technologies for stem cell research includes the industry’s most highly-validated shRNA li

Shalini Gupta