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ImmunoACT: The IIT Bombay Spinout That Made CAR-T an Indian Therapy

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Three years after India approved its first home-grown CAR-T therapy, the Navi Mumbai company behind it is profitable, in more than 80 hospitals and already building its next products. It is the right place to start a 100-day look at the startups reshaping Indian life sciences.

ImmunoACT

Problem

CAR-T cell therapy can bring patients with relapsed blood cancers back from the brink, but for years it lived almost entirely in the US and Europe, at prices that put it out of reach for nearly every Indian family. Patients who had run out of options at home faced a choice between an overseas treatment costing several hundred thousand dollars and no treatment at all.

Product

NexCAR19 (actalycabtagene autoleucel) is an autologous CD19-directed CAR-T therapy: a patient's own T cells are collected, engineered to recognise a protein on cancerous B cells, and infused back as a single dose. Its CAR was designed at IIT Bombay with a humanised binder, which the team says lowers toxicity compared with designs that rely on mouse-derived components. Manufacturing happens at ImmunoACT's GMP facility in Navi Mumbai, with a company-stated turnaround of about 18 days from cell collection to release.

Proof

India's drug regulator, CDSCO, granted marketing authorisation in October 2023, and the therapy launched commercially in April 2024. It is approved for relapsed or refractory B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma and B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in patients aged 15 and above. The pivotal phase 1/2 study, run with Tata Memorial Centre and published in Lancet Haematology, reported a 73% overall response rate at the efficacy dose, severe cytokine release syndrome in about 5% of patients and no neurological events.

The commercial numbers have followed. By mid-2025 more than 350 patients had been treated across 70 hospitals, a network the company now puts above 80. For FY25 it reported revenue of Rs 62 crore and a profit before tax of Rs 12 crore in its first full year of operations, a rare result for a cell therapy company anywhere.

People

Founder Prof. Rahul Purwar, an immunologist who trained in Germany and the US, spent close to a decade with his IIT Bombay team, including Dr Atharva Karulkar and Dr Alka Dwivedi, taking the construct from lab to clinic. Tata Memorial clinicians Dr Hasmukh Jain and Dr Gaurav Narula led the clinical and translational work. The company has since added commercial depth, appointing former Roche India managing director V. Simpson Immanuel as a strategic advisor.

Purse

Laurus Labs backed ImmunoACT early and lifted its holding to about 34% in 2023 with an additional Rs 80 crore investment. On the patient side, launch pricing of around Rs 42 lakh has come down to roughly Rs 30 lakh, about 90% below Western CAR-T list prices, and a partnership with Mango Sciences added zero-interest EMI plans and an outcome-linked offer of up to Rs 10 lakh each for eligible patients.

Plan

ImmunoACT is now taking NexCAR19 abroad and widening its pipeline. It has licensed the therapy to Cipla for South Africa, Algeria and Morocco, and a clinical trial has been approved in Mexico. Next in line is a BCMA-targeted CAR-T for multiple myeloma, alongside research into off-the-shelf and in vivo CAR-T. Purwar describes the goal as a platform rather than a single product, one that could eventually reach solid tumours and autoimmune disease.

Why it matters: ImmunoACT has shown that an Indian academic spinout can take an advanced therapy through approval, manufacturing and profitable launch at home. That is the proof point a whole cohort of cell and gene therapy startups is now building on.

FAST FACTS

Company	Immunoadoptive Cell Therapy Pvt. Ltd. (ImmunoACT)

HQ and plant	Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra
Origin	Spun out of IIT Bombay (incubated at SINE), 2018
Founder	Prof. Rahul Purwar, IIT Bombay
Lead product	NexCAR19 (actalycabtagene autoleucel), CD19 CAR-T
Approval	CDSCO marketing authorisation, October 2023; launched April 2024
Indications	Relapsed or refractory B-cell NHL and B-ALL, age 15 and above
Strategic investor	Laurus Labs, about 34% stake
FY25	Revenue Rs 62 crore; profit before tax Rs 12 crore (reported)
Series category	Startup (DPIIT 2026 test): incorporated 2018, FY25 revenue Rs 62 crore against the Rs 20 crore cap; independent, as Laurus Labs holds a minority stake
Next	BCMA CAR-T for myeloma; off-the-shelf and in vivo CAR-T research

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