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India offers great market in oncology for UK

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He became the general manager and UK director at BioChem Pharma prior to working as an independent management consultant for Swiss, French, US and Japanese biotech companies.

Later, he co-founded two UK-based biotechnology companies. He currently works for UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) as a Life Sciences Sector Specialist.

Q: Can you share insights into the work happening in the area of oncology?

Mr Jon Mowles: Government sponsored organizations encourage the uptake of clinical trials. Indian companies want to come to the UK and collaborate with these organizations.

Also, now we are witnessing a successful track record of recruiting patients for clinical trials. We have more patients now in the area of oncology clinical trials in the UK than anywhere else in Europe.

Q: About a million new cancer cases are reported in India every year. How can the UK oncology companies leverage this and create mutual benefits to both India and the UK?

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We are looking at accessible healthcare and work collaboratively with Indian organizations, companies, and individual hospitals.

Affordability and accessibility are the key areas where we are looking forward to work.

Q: What are the major challenges faced by the UK oncology and cancer research organizations today?

It is always going to be the funding. No scientist ever has enough money for his research. We have various funding streams in the UK.

When the new budget came out during the financial crisis, funding drastically reduced. It is a sign of government intention to push health budget.

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Â We remain in the forefront of research science. One of the important financial aid that is available is through charities.

Q: Can you tell us something about Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and how it plans to work in India?

An interesting statistics revealed that 25 percent of all drugs prescribed in the UK has Indian origins.

Without India what would happen to the National Health Service (NHS)? We would be forced to buy expensive medicines then. Indian companies are very successful in generics. Our interest is to work collaboratively with them.

Thus, the UK biologics industry and Indian generic companies can mutually benefit from each other.

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Q: What is the UK's mandate in the areas of oncology?

In the UK, our mandate is to research in order to come up with both diagnostics and treatment of cancer by whatever methods. The main focus is on innovation in research.

Q: How can cancer research organizations speed up the flow of ideas from a lab bench to patient's bedside?

We started putting academic groups in collaboration with oncology research companies, rather than separating them. So now we have companies working with academic groups. Thus it is beneficial to both companies and academia.

We have collaborated funding from organizations and universities and that has proved to be very successful. And in order to speed up the research, it has to be focused.

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Companies know what is going to bring in money. And collaborations will always work. It is not just all about academics. We need both.

Companies and universities work together and it drives the focus. When the two come together, it is like a good marriage.

Q: What methods do NIHR Cancer Research Network (NCRN) employ to increase patient participation in clinical trials? Can the same be applied in India by clinical research organizations?

It is primarily through educating the public. The key here is education. Once educated, people are willing to take part in clinical trials more openly. People trust the doctors in the UK, since it is all very carefully controlled.

We are also very successful in conducting clinical trials with children. In India, clinical trials need to be more transparent, carried out in an ethical manner to encourage patient participation and involvement.

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The reason we are here is that India is a great market for oncology and other sectors. We want to create a win-win situation for both India and the UK.

Collaboration isn't one sided. It works only when both parties unite. We are also trying to build existing ties in India.

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