

India high on GSK's radar

11 April 2005 | News



On February 22 this year, Glaxo SmithKline or GSK, commenced the work to set up a vaccine filling and packing unit for vaccines intended for India. And it is expected to be fully operational by early 2006. "This day marks a historic milestone for GSK in India. This new vaccine facility reflects the company's commitment to India and recognises the high quality skills and science base in India. As India continues to improve the framework, especially protection of intellectual property rights, its attractiveness to investors such as GSK will grow," noted S Kalyanasundaram, managing director, GSK India and vice president, South Asia, GSK International at the groundbreaking ceremony at Nasik.

This development is a significant one considering the fact that GSK had given the green signal for a vaccine filling and packing unit for vaccines intended for India as early as 2003. And the building work next to the GSK Pharma production unit at Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), Ambad, Nasik was supposed to commence in 2004. And it finally took off in February 2005.

It may be recalled that GSK manufactures all of its vaccines at Rixensart, Belgium, and Germany. In 2003, it delivered over 780 million doses of vaccines across 156 countries including India, the US and Western Europe-an average of 25 doses per second. The vaccines for India are also currently developed, produced, filled and packaged at the company's vaccines headquarters and manufacturing facility at Rixensart, Belgium.

The Nasik facility will be GSK's first manufacturing site to co-house a pharmaceutical and a vaccine-manufacturing unit. The quality control will be under close supervision of GSK Biologicals, Belgium. The manufacturing facility, when completed, will possess all attributes of the most modern vaccine-manufacturing plants globally. The plant is being built to cater to the Indian

market needs, which could be expanded to meet the requirements of neighbouring countries.

GSK Vaccines, a part of the GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals Ltd, supplies vaccines to protect against a wide range of infectious diseases including diphtheria, Hepatitis A and B, Hib infections, influenza, measles, meningitis ACWY, pertussis, polio, rubella, tetanus and chicken pox. It has been amongst the first few to have introduced these products in the country.

It recently launched "Mencevax ACWY", the first and only meningitis vaccine available in India. "Meningococcal meningitis has grown to be a serious cause for concern, predominantly affecting travelers and people living in crowded spaces. Vaccination is the most effective, practical and convenient way of preventing this disease. GSK has been supplying the vaccine to the Indian government for the last three years and has now made it available to the private market as well," noted Sumer Dheri, general manager, GSK Vaccines.

Besides having many firsts to its credit, it is a key player in cold chain management, which helps to keep the vaccine's potency intact and is the most reliable in its category and trusted by private practitioners. The company has been a pioneer in creating consumer awareness about vaccine preventable diseases through direct in-clinic education materials and also through its innovative and novel concept called Famili Vaccines, an immunization awareness initiative of GSK group in India.

In India, GSK Vaccines has a field force of 150 people and 11 vaccines for both adult and pediatric categories. The sales from this division stood at Rs 80 crore for the year ending December 2003 and is growing at rate of 20 percent each year. It has so far covered one fourth of the Indian vaccine market. And it is now focusing on taking away the un-represented or grey market, which is close to 40 percent.

In addition to selling and marketing vaccines, India is supporting GSK Biologicals in its vaccines development process through its clinical data management center based in Bangalore, for the last 10 years. GSK Biologicals now is considering developing India as a global hub for clinical research and development. GSK has lined up global trials for four vaccines-two vaccines for rotavirus, one for cervical cancer, and a combination DTP vaccine in India during 2005. It is also going to conduct clinical R&D for its AIDS, dengue, malaria and TB. It hopes to conduct trials in India for all its products in the research pipeline. GSK's vaccines pipeline is amongst the best in the world, particularly those against diseases such as rotavirus, malaria, TB, dengue fever, Hepatitis E and typhoid. It is expected to introduce newer vaccines in India in the next few years.

Prevention is after all better than cure and nobody knows that better than the vaccine manufacturers. This belief helped GSK Vaccines to achieve the market leadership in India and it continues to play a major role in serving the people better.