

'We must invest in technology awareness'

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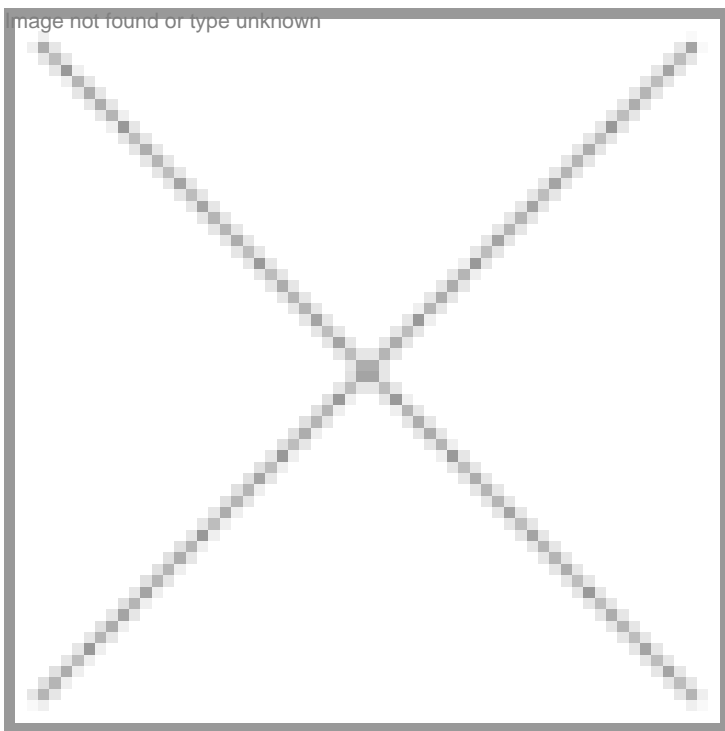


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Sunit Trivedi,
director, BD Biosciences, India

Headquartered in Gurgaon, Haryana, BD Biosciences has been a dominant player in the Indian flow cytometry business for a long period of time. The company also caters to other markets such as discovery labware, advanced consumables, vaccine immunization, specialized evacuated blood collection for research assays, and advanced bioprocess ingredients for vaccine production. BD has been at the forefront for investing in training and education of flow cytometry for nearly 15 years. Recently, the company was in news for establishing a fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS) academy in collaboration with Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi. In an interview with BioSpectrum, Sunit Trivedi, director, BD Biosciences, India speaks about the market situation, buying trends, and company's strategy.

What is the current flow cytometry market size in India?

Q Trivedi: The flow cytometry market can be broken up into three major segments; research, clinical, and industrial. Core research institutes in India have deep penetrations of flow cytometry with lesser headroom to grow. But higher education segment, including medical colleges, has huge potential for instrumentation and research reagents. The clinical market is driven by AIDS monitoring, leukemia and lymphoma monitoring, and cord blood banking. This segment provides good growth for consumable and reagent business. Personal analyzers and sorters will attract major research market. However, industrial segment has not shown much promise.

The current market size for flow instrumentation and reagents should be in the range of 140 crore. India can see huge growth in the field of clinical flow cytometry. Companies that can invest in research and development (R&D) to expand into

clinical menu can address 20,000 potential labs in the next 10-15 years with growth in instruments and reagents businesses.

Has there been any major addition to your product portfolio?

Q BD has invested heavily for the last 15 years in training and education along with building strong after sales engineering support, which has helped BD to grab majority market share. We acquired Accuri last financial year to make flow cytometry affordable and easy to use. BD is also investing heavily in special order research product (SORP) platforms to meet customized needs. We plan to approach the sorting market with personal sorters concept and will introduce FACSJaaz range of compact sorters shortly in the market, making sorters affordable and compact. We add new range of antibodies almost every two months in Pharmingen product range. We have also introduced FACSVerse analyzers in the market with state-of-the-art technology.

How do you visualize the growth of biosuppliers market in India?

Q The biosuppliers market will continue to grow at double digits but biosuppliers will have to invest significantly in creating technology awareness. Companies that will invest now will succeed and create strategic differentiators for themselves. Research market is driven by goodwill and references and goodwill comes with sustained serious intents, initiatives, and efforts that create confidence among buyers to have their choice of supplier.

How has the advancements in technology, especially the miniaturization of flow cytometry machines, helped your clients?

Q The purpose of miniaturization is to make technology affordable and easier to use. We believe this will make more scientists and clinicians to make use of technology with minimal training and to use it optimally.

Have you noticed any change in the buying behavior of clients in the last decade?

Q We witnessed encouragement from the government to undertake research and enhanced funding, but R&D remained at 0.85 percent of gross domestic product though the government promised to bring it to 1.4 percent by 2012. We also saw government encouraging universities and medical colleges to undertake research, especially in the last two years. Though funding is available for capital equipment, for consumables adequate funding still remains a challenge. This, we hope, will change in near future.

What are the next steps for BD Biosciences?

Q We have multiplied our business by 40 times in the last 15 years. The consumable business is growing well too. We need to invest in creating new market for capital instrumentation about which we are very optimistic. We foresee personal flow cytometry growing at a faster pace which will consequently grow consumable business. Customized instrumentation will be a major driver for growth. We also see few unexplored areas which have large potential and can provide high momentum to grow flow cytometry business.

Rahul Koul in New Delhi