

The role of pharma companies in coming years

There are many factors that divide the world. Access to latest medical facilities and drug therapies is one amongst them. Two parameters have major influence -cost and reach. They become more dominant in countries like India where socioeconomic differences are huge. Dr Sanjay Agrawal, Head, Medical Department, Corona Remedies suggests some remedies

Despite appreciable economical growth, India still has the world's largest number of poor people in a single country. Of its nearly one billion inhabitants, an estimated 350-400 million are below the poverty line due to uneven



distribution of wealth. Managing their food requirements is still a tough task and spending on medicines is nearly impossible for majority of them. This factor is further complicated by changing nature of disease pattern from acute illnesses to chronic diseases requiring life long medical care.

The government and other NGOs are striving hard by providing free or low cost medicines at many places. These efforts are further supported by responsible pharma companies who can play even larger role in times to come by making essential drugs more affordable, reaching uncovered remote places and enhancing research activities in the field

of existing molecules and search of newer molecules.

But are these companies supported enough to support these functions? Unfortunately the answer is NO!

As per the records of 2000, there are 20000 registered pharma companies in India and many more have been launched after that. Most of these companies launch their products in the already developed markets rather than spreading into unrepresented areas. This causes eating up of the existing market share for many major companies and the fierce competition leads to reduced drug prices adversely affecting profit margins.

The government's National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) do not allow an increase in prices of drugs in the mentioned list. This substantially reduces their profits compared to pharma companies abroad.

India now being a part of World Trade Organization (WTO), the newly launched patented products are not available for marketing under Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) patent laws. This will reduce the new launches by almost all companies limiting their growth.

One may say that the alternative is to introduce own patented products. But is this possible for all pharma companies? The search of new molecule with all phases of clinical trials involves a huge expenditure of money. Even after that there are high chances of failure due to incompatibilities at every stage. Due to these even the giants in international pharma market have reduced their basic research expenditure in entirely new molecule search.

In view of these dark realities, what they should do? Do they stop their contribution to support the good cause of service to society by offering quality products at economical prices? Certainly not! There are many bright sides as well which they should pick up to sustain and grow themselves and also enhance their contribution in the healthcare of society.

Untapped potential areas

There are many unrepresented potential areas where companies can launch their products and enhance sales. Healthcare awareness can be increased by conducting local camps with the help of medical professionals. The reach to far remote areas can be increased by providing special incentives to concerned people or who are willing to go to these places.

The company should have both short as well as long term R&D plans for future investigations. There are many areas like nutraceuticals where the potential has

not yet been fully exploited and the comparatively low expenditure research can yield better and safer therapies with synergistic combinations. The simultaneous concentration on preventive therapies can also go a long way towards one's progress. All that need is the continuous efforts and that too with innovation.

We are sure that pharma companies will keep up their contribution by providing high quality medicines at all required places in right quantities at right times and importantly at most affordable prices.