

## Biocon, Shantha in joint venture for human insulin

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The Bangalore-based Biocon India and the Hyderabad-based Shantha Biotechnics announced a joint venture--Biocon-Shantha Biotech Ltd-- to manufacture human insulin in India. The joint venture will leverage the existing capabilities of both companies. In addition, an investment of Rs 20 crore would be made, said Varaprasad Reddy, managing director, Shantha Biotech.

According to the reports there will be collaboration on the technical side in manufacturing to be done at both facilities. The marketing will be done under their respective brand names in different geographies. Shantha Biotech has been working on the human insulin for the last three years and has developed a lab scale product. However, the company does not have the capacity to produce it on a larger scale. This is where Biocon will step in to do the "up scaling" in its plafactor fermentation unit. The upscaling was not just translation of the seed to bigger volumes, but would involve some more technology inputs, Reddy said. The two companies were jointly working on this too. The bulk insulin will be sent back to Shantha Biotech for quality testing, vial ling and labeling, after which, it will be marketed by both in India.

Currently, the only human insulin that is available in the country is imported and an expensive one. The other less expensive variety is the one derived from cows and pigs. "Human rejection of bovine/porcine insulin is very high," Reddy said. Shantha's corporate philosophy has been to make drug and vaccines available at affordable rates. The current market for insulin is estimated at Rs 150 crore (divided equally between human and animal insulin). Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, CMD, Biocon, hoped that the joint venture would help expand the market to Rs 1,000 crore.