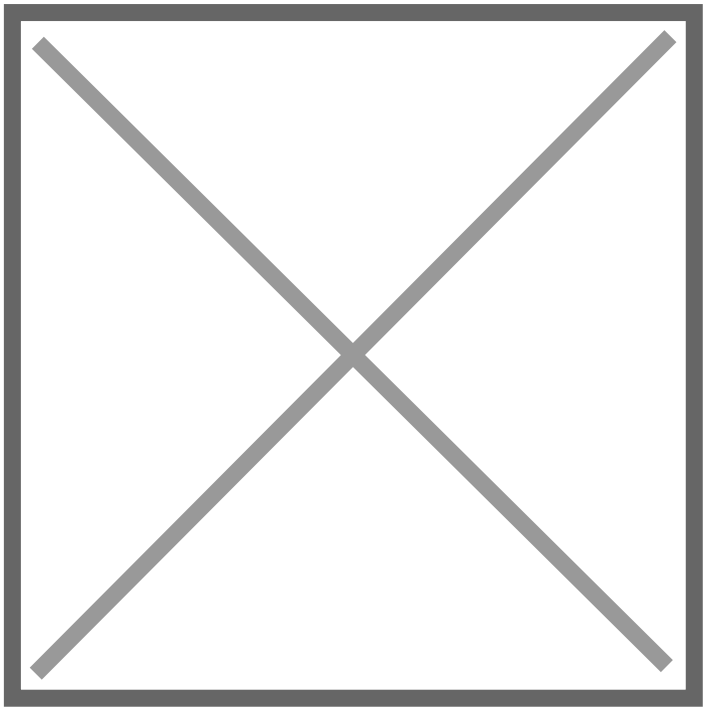
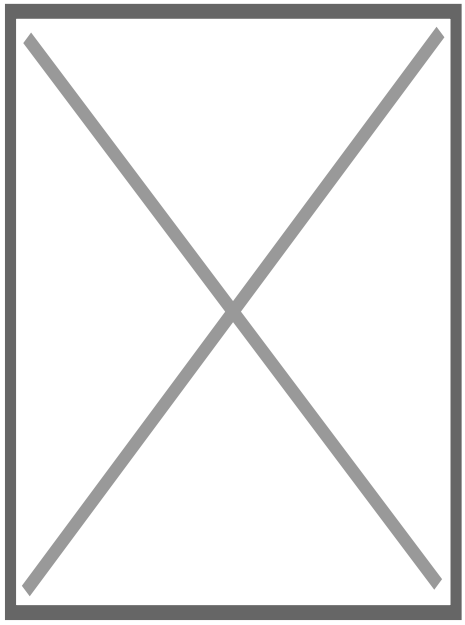
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Biopartnering is Advinus mantra for success

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Biopartnering is Advinus mantra for success



Advinus Therapeutics is exploring opportunities in companies based in the US and Europe, which are looking at cost-effective, high-quality solutions for their R&D programs.

Advinus Therapeutics was set up as a venture between the Tata Group and Dr Rashmi Barbhaiya, the former head of research at Ranbaxy. After his return to India following a long stint in the US as a researcher for drug maker Bristol-Myers Squibb and later at Ranbaxy's in New Delhi, Dr Barbhaiya was looking to run his own show when he found a backer in the Tatas, who were keen on developing businesses in the knowledge sector. They were looking for someone to turn a small agrochemical laboratory in Bangalore into a center for clinical research. Dr Barbhaiya agreed to run the Bangalore facility, but he also wanted funding for a modern drug discovery lab. The result was Advinus Therapeutics, a company whose new drug research is powered by Indian scientists returning from the US and other countries. The name Advinus is shorthand for "Advantage India US", says Dr Barbhaiya. Truly so it is.

Focused on new drug discovery and development of pharmaceutical and agrochemical products, Advinus Therapeutics is promoted by the Tatas, with total revenues of more than $17 billion and a market capitalization of more than $31 billion. Dr Barbhaiya, who is a co-promoter with a smaller stake, is the CEO and managing director of the company.

Advinus is uniquely focused on pharmaceutical R&D with no generics or API focus. The discovery arm of Advinus located in Pune, focuses on metabolic diseases, inflammation and neglected diseases. The unit is fully integrated from hit to preclinical candidate. "Our presence in India helps us enhance the productivity and efficiency of our agrochemical and pharmaceutical R&D programs to unprecedented levels of cost-effectiveness and quality by bringing together demonstrated world class expertise with the talent and economies of India," says Dr Barbhaiya. Advinus' development unit offers an integrated service platform for process chemistry, DMPK, clinical pharmacology, safety assessment, analytical R&D, bioanalytical and formulation development.

Advinus Therapeutics is already being recognized at a global level. Last year, it was named as India's best emerging CRO in drug discovery services, according to a survey conducted by Proximare, a management consulting firm based in New Jersey that exclusively serves pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies with strategic issues.
The company is exploring opportunities in companies based in the US and Europe which are looking at cost-effective, high-quality solutions for their R&D programs. One such collaboration occurred in November 2006. Advinus and Merck & Co., Inc. formed a drug discovery and clinical development collaboration in the area of metabolic disorders to work together to develop clinically validated drug candidates for metabolic disorders.

In another initiative last November, Advinus forged an alliance with Ahmedabad-based Veeda CR to leverage each other's capabilities to create an integrated drug discovery through phase II platform. The alliance offered packages involving preclinical and early clinical development, animal and human safety pharmacology, preclinical toxicology and pharmacology, clinical pharmacology as also microdosing capabilities to pick drug candidates on the basis of human PK data. The alliance seeks to leverage Veeda's biomarkers capabilities for preclinical and clinical applications. This tie-up has set new precedence in the emerging drug discovery industry in the country and will attract companies looking for preclinical and clinical services in the European and American geographies.

With the return of Dr Rashmi Barbhaiya with years of US experience in drug discovery and development, the Indian pharmaceuticals business has indeed received a shot in the arm.

Namratha Jagtap