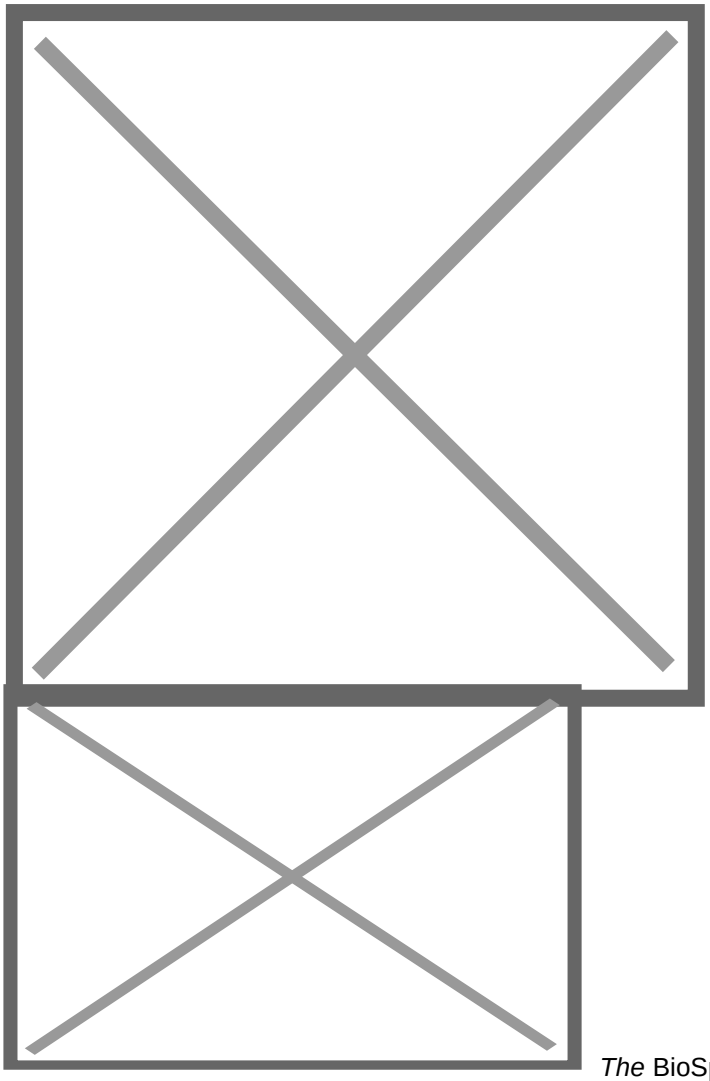


BioSpectrum Technology Forum 2010: Future of India

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The BioSpectrum *Technology Forum 2010 saw the convergence of R&D heads from the Indian life science industry brainstorming and hashing out strategies for effective R&D in India*

India has the capability to become a major R&D player in the years to come. Foreseeing this opportunity, BioSpectrum hosted the first ever Biospectrum Technology Forum (BSTF) 2010, which brought together on a common platform, research leaders both from the public and private sectors. The two-day BSTF event included six panel discussions that led toÂ innovative ideas, effective R&D strategies, insights on approaches to accelerate research programs; and information on latest tools, technologies and new collaboration routes.

Day one commenced with E Abraham Mathew, chief editor of BioSpectrum delivering the welcome address followed by Dr WM Dhumane, senior joint controller of patents and designs, Government of India, addressing the gatherings on 'The issue of ways and means to improve India's IP environment'. Ã¢â?¬Å?Validating the novelty of a drug is an issue in India. To improve IP environment, India needs to learn from other countries. Perfection is the need of the hour, I am happy to say that India is moving towards that direction,Ã¢â?¬? observed Dr Dhumane.Â

Future of R&D

The first panel discussion focused on the topic, 'What is needed to promote R&D in Indian life sciences industry and the future forward'. Chaired by Dr PM Murali, CEO, Evolva, the panel members included, Chandrashekhar Nair, founder director of Bigtec; Dr Rustom Mody, CSO and director (Quality), Intas Biopharmaceuticals; Dinesh Puri, CMD, Medived Innovations; Dr Venkata Ramana, research director, Reliance Life Sciences; and Dr Manu Jaggi, director, Dabur Research Foundation. Dr Mody pointed out the obstacles in India's road to innovation, Ã¢â?¬Å?For innovation, we need patience and funding. Indians, as such, lack the risk appetite, venture capitalists are showing reluctance to invest. Fund managers need to change their mindset. They need toÂ think about the long-term benefits,Ã¢â?¬? he said. Dr Mody also stressed that India needs to strengthen its IP environment and could take lessons from the EU which is more systematic and organized.

Collaboration strategies
Day two commenced with the second panel discussion on 'The collaboration strategy for R&D'. Panelists included Dr PS Ahuja, director, Institute of Himalayan Bioresources and Technology; Dr KC Gupta, director, Indian Institute of Toxicology Research; Narayanan Suresh, group editor, BioSpectrum; Dr Ram Vishwakarma, director, Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR); Adiya Burman, MD, OncQuest Laboratories.

The key point of this session was the need to spin off companies. CSIR is open to collaboration, spin off small companies and go for PPPs. Researchers in India need to synergize to enter the global scenario.Â Dr Vishwakarma mentioned, Ã¢â?¬Å?The key to collaboration includes mutual respect for the other partner. While entering into a partnership, company's scientists should talk to each other rather than the directors.Ã¢â?¬?

Need for R&D efficiencies
The third panel discussion focused on the topic 'Creating R&D efficiencies'. The panel includedÂ Dr Swami Subramaniam, director, Worldwide Licensing and External Research-India, Merck; Dr Abhay Deshpande, director, Jai Research Foundation and Dr Mahesh Bhalgat, vice president, Biological E.
Dr Subramaniam, said, Ã¢â?¬Å?Collaboration and outsourcing are the emerging models to reduce cost of in-house multiple specialty research facilities and time. Outsourcing is an efficient solution for enhancing efficiency.Ã¢â?¬? The Q&A session that followed saw some interesting exchanges very useful to the participants.

Genomic research
One of the highlights of BSTF was a discussion on the Human Genome Organization (HUGO) project, presided over by Dr Edison Liu, president-HUGO and Dr Partha Majumder, head of genetics, Indian Statistical Institute. Dr Liu mentioned that in genomic research a shift from regions like the US to emerging markets is inevitable in the future. Ã¢â?¬Å?As far as the HUGO initiative is concerned, the focus now is shifting to Asia, especially to regions like India, China, Singapore and Korea. This region in future will become a very important for genomic research.Ã¢â?¬?

Overcoming roadblocks
The fourth panel discussion was based on the topic, 'R&D during the times of recession'. Panelists included Dr Shailesh Mehta, head of biologics, GSK; Dr Rajeev Soni, president and COO, Premas Biotech; Dr Shivprakash, MD, Synchron Research; Dr Jitendra Kumar, vice president, Life Science Incubator, IKP Knowledge Park; Dr R Ezhil Arasan, MD, Dr VRE Research Laboratories; and Dr Sarjana Dutt, R&D head, OncQuest Laboratories.Â

Panelists agreed that clinical R&D was still a grey area in India. Suggestions provided by panelists covered areas like outsourcing; CROs, CRAMS, and PPPs; strategic licensing; and innovating product for cost-effective R&D. Panelists suggested that research teams should look at the COLA model- to collaborate, to outsource, to leverage expertise mainly licensing and lastly acceptability.

R&D leadership strategies
BSTF would have been incomplete without the panel discussion with the theme, 'Leadership strategies in R&D Ã¢â?¬â?? HR perspectives'. The panel consisted some of the prominent HR experts from the life sciences industry: Thomas Putti, VP-HR, Advinus Therapeutics; Mukund Mandyam, director-HR, Quintiles India; Mohan R Sharma, Senior VP-HR, Matrix Laboratories; Niranjan Reddy, VPÃ¢â?¬â??HR, GVK BIO and it was moderated by Dr Gopal Dasika, CSO, Actis Biologics. Dr Dasika led the discussion in a logical fashion and all the panelists chipped in with their valuable inputs on the theme. One of the key points discussed was leadership behavior. A common suggestion that came across from Thomas Putti and Niranjan Reddy was, companies should encourage young talent. They should be given full responsibility and credit for their work. They also stressed that young employees should be encouraged to do their PhD.

Integrating IP practices
Dr Malathi Laskhmi Kumaran, IP expert, Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan, gave an overview on 'Managing IP-Key to R&D strategy'.Â The last panel discussion was on 'Integrating good IP practices into an organization's DNA'. The panelists included Dr Gopakumar G Nair, CEO, Gopakumar Nair Associates; Dr Milind Antani, head of life sciences, Nishith Desai Associates; Deepam Mishra, CEO, i2indiaVentures; and Dr Rena Patel ofÂ RP Consulting, US. The discussion moderated by Dr Antani focused on key aspects like IP management by a company and ways of protect it.

In a nutshell, BSTF concluded that when the industry is competing at a global level R&D needs to be the next hot spot. India has to devise a strategy for promoting its R&D agenda. Education system is a good place to begin with. We need scientists and researchers who can think out-of-the-box and can in-turn drive innovation. Moreover, with drug development and commercialization costs sky-rocketing, the industry should look at approaches that drive down R&D costs. They need to re-evaluate their R&D model. The BioSpectrum Technology Forum 2010 thus discussed the strategies to clear some of these roadblocks and drive the country's innovation agenda with efficient R&D.