

"We will continue to invest in our India business"

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In 2019, US pharma major Eli Lilly and Company completed 25 years of its presence in India through its Gurugram headquartered wholly owned subsidiary Lilly India. Currently headed by Luca Visini who is serving as the Managing Director of Lilly India, the company is committed to offer advanced treatment options for chronic diseases such as diabetes, lung cancer, gastric cancer, osteoporosis, men's health and growth-hormone deficiency. To celebrate this landmark occasion with Lilly India, BioSpectrum got in touch with Luca Visini in an elaborate conversation about the company's growth and future plans.

Edited Excerpts-

Since its inception in India 25 years ago, Eli Lilly has developed around 8 products for diabetes treatment in India? How has been the journey and the subsequent evolution over the years?

Our journey of over 25 years in India has been both rewarding and challenging. We have maintained a steady growth pace and have made available our most innovative drugs for patients with diabetes in India. We see a large unmet need for India's

growing diabetic population. Over the years we have introduced several innovative diabetes drugs in India to cater to this unmet need. These include human insulin, analogue insulin, basal insulin and the first once-weekly GLP-1 therapy in 2016. India has the second highest number of patients with diabetes. Given the current trends, it is projected for India to have the highest number of diabetes patients by 2045. We have strategic partnerships with Cipla and Lupin for marketing and distribution of our diabetes medicines to expand access to healthcare practitioners and patients. This is done with the aim to make our innovations accessible to people in need, thereby bringing down the burden of diabetes in India. We will continue to invest in our India business and continue to deliver life-saving breakthrough medicines and solutions to address the country's specific health needs.

As Diabetes constitutes the largest part of Lilly's portfolio in India, how much is spent on the R&D and how much revenue is generated?

All our research and development is consolidated globally. We have R&D facilities in 8 countries, and we conduct clinical research in more than 55 countries. Over 7800 of our global employees, that's about 23 per cent of our workforce, is engaged in research. In 2018 alone, Lilly invested \$5,307 million in R&D which was 21.6 per cent as a percentage of our sales.

How was the growth of the company during the FY18-19 in India, and what are your expectations from this year?

I am happy to share with you that Lilly India is growing every year and we are excited that we have the opportunity to serve unmet needs in the market through our medicines. We are optimistic about our business prospects and the value we bring to patients in India and will continue to invest in our India business to deliver life-saving breakthrough medicines and solutions to address the country's specific health needs. We collaborate with various industry associations to promote dialogue on bringing more predictability to the pharmaceutical environment in India. Predictability on various fronts such as Intellectual Property protection, pricing policies, new drug launch process, streamlined regulatory structures and uniform marketing and commercial practices will be good for the industry and will help promote innovation.

Besides diabetes, Eli Lilly has developed very few products in its other priority areas in India. A growth hormone related product was developed back in 1999. Are there any new products coming up in this area? Why has there been so much lag?

Given our legacy in diabetes, we have a strong portfolio and an excellent track record of drug innovation in this disease area. But we have also focused on other therapies where there is urgent need for new medical solutions such as cancer, bone health, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), erectile dysfunction and growth disorder. We launched a new medicine for RA and entered into the autoimmune segment in India in 2018. As and when there is a new drug development, we analyze the need gap in the market and introduce the medicine in the market. Our new product pipeline includes molecules in different stages of development for diabetes, oncology, immunology and pain. We are also working on innovative drug delivery devices. Today, Lilly has one of the richest mid-to-late stage pipelines in its history, with 7 molecules in regulatory review, 18 molecules in Phase III clinical development, 13 molecules in Phase II testing and 24 molecules in Phase I. We would like to bring these innovative molecules to India depending on the market needs over the next decade.

What are the recent developments in the area of cancer at Eli Lilly? Any new products in the pipeline for India?

We have a strong portfolio in oncology including lung and gastric cancer. In 2017, we launched the first solution for second line treatment of gastric cancer to patients in India. This is another drug we believe can improve the treatment prognosis for Indian patients suffering from stomach cancer. Early last year, Lilly acquired LOXO Oncology which was the largest ever acquisition by Lilly to broaden its cancer treatment efforts. This acquisition will expand the scope of Lilly's oncology portfolio into precision medicines through the addition of a marketed therapy and a pipeline of highly selective potential medicines for patients with genomically defined cancers.

For India, Eli Lilly has another priority area which is untouched- osteoporosis? What are the plans in this sector?

I would like to state here that osteoporosis has been on our agenda for a long time. In 2004, we launched a recombinant DNA medicine for osteoporosis in India. Then in 2010, we launched a medicine administering device that made it easier for patients to administer their treatment. The current treatment in osteoporosis continues to be highly innovative and is benefiting many patients in need.

As CSR initiatives at Eli Lilly, what is in store for India in 2020?

Lilly is working on community initiatives in the areas of Education and Healthcare.

EDUCATION:

As part of our commitment to the local community, Lilly supports a school for the underprivileged called – KADAM - STEP UP. Located in Jharsa, Guragon, the school is run with the support from Humana People India (HPPI) since February 2014. We provide remedial educational support through tuition classes for children, after they return home from school and a three-month basic computer programme. The school also runs the Mid-day Meal programme for children at the centre through Akshaya Patra Foundation. Lilly India has also partnered with United Way of Delhi to support other education related initiatives in the past.

HEALTHCARE:

In the space of healthcare, Lilly India has partnered with United Way of Delhi to work with Project HOPE for a comprehensive capacity building program for primary care physicians. The program is focused on the prevention, early diagnosis, management and timely referral of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). In partnership with the Uttar Pradesh Ministry of Health, Project HOPE is leading a project to build the capacity of healthcare professionals in the public sector to promote and practice relevant, up-to-date patient-centric care. The training modules include pathophysiology and management of common NCDs, basic principles of healthy lifestyle, treatment and management of complications. We also have a course that focuses on the development of interpersonal and counselling skills.

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