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V B Pharma working on plasma-based treatment for COVID-19 patients

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The organisation is also collaborating with Chandigarh-based BioBridge Healthcare Solutions and BioNEST Bioincubator, Punjab University to further its efforts



While India's hopes for an early vaccine against COVID-19 got delayed by a year, there's another beacon for cost-effective COVID treatment. A Karnataka based pharma company Vinodbadgu Pharmaceutical Pvt. Ltd. (V B Pharma) specializing in plasma technology has revealed that it is already working on research to synthesise a more effective plasma-based treatment for COVID patients.

"Since May 2020, we're on a mission to develop a safe, efficient and cost-effective treatment for COVID 19 patients in India", said Prashant Karulkar, director, Vinodbadgu Pharmaceutical Pvt. Ltd. (V B Pharma).

"So far, we've evaluated donor plasma from COVID-recovered patients and identified different kinds of COVID strains across India. By our count, this number is 12. Our sample strengths are from Solapur. We've been able to identify specific antigens for the COVID strains from here and the most common antibodies against them", added Karulkar.

Dr Vinodkumar Badgu, the managing director, Vinodbadgu Pharmaceutical Pvt. Ltd. (V B Pharma), shares Karulkar's enthusiasm. Sharing some of his observations on the research, Dr Badgu said, "Out of the 12 common COVID-19 strains, we've identified one common antibody which all recovered patients have created within themselves to fight against the virus. In total, we've observed seven kinds of antibodies that these patients hold."

What's the next step? "The next step for us is antibody mapping, which usually spans 2-3 months and biopanning. Biopanning is where we will take a strain of the active virus and verify whether these antibodies will eliminate it. Once we're all successful, we will begin coding the winning antibody on a molecular level and recreate it artificially", Dr.Badgu explained.

The plasma products company is on the same track as many other international organisations working on plasma-based solutions for COVID-19. The Houston Methodist Hospital in Houston, USA, the Pisa University Hospital, Italy and Sinovac in China are carrying out plasma-based research too.

The organisation is also collaborating with Chandigarh-based BioBridge Healthcare Solutions and BioNEST Bioincubator, Punjab University to further its efforts. They're seeking multiple corporate partners and government support for resources, infrastructure and funding to expedite the research.

"Right now, we appeal to corporates, industry bodies and the government to help us with funds to carry out this experimental work. We need to augment our infrastructure for equipment, instruments and talented resources. We also need regulatory support to expedite approvals through this process", said Karulkar.

"We will partner with someone with the facilities for large-scale, lab production of monoclonal (artificially created) antibodies", added Dr Badgu.

Plasma treatment has turned into an important treatment for COVID-19, especially in India. Multiple states have approved its use for critically ill patients. Delhi has also begun the first Indian plasma bank and is requesting recovered patients to donate to it.