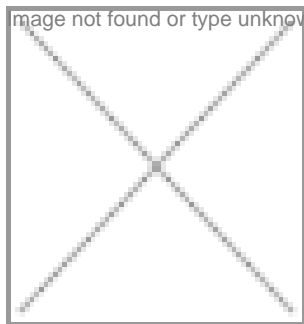


From Biosimilars to Similar Biologics

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Just a decade ago, the contours of the Indian biotech industry began to emerge with the entry of dozens of promising start-ups. Companies in this segment have to be long term players due to the long gestation periods involved product discovery, development, regulatory approvals and

Yet, within a decade many of these start-ups have taken tentative steps to remove the shackles of geography and look at the world itself as their playground. The boundaries of India need not limit their ambitions, was the refrain. The baby steps have turned into significant leaps for many of the

The growing trend of the presence of Indian biotech industry, still very small in the global context, on foreign shores has been attracting some attention in recent months. Who are the players who have boldly ventured out of India in recent years? What is their motive? How do these companies view these foreign forays, both strategically and tactically? The Cover Story – 'India Biotech Goes Global' in this issue of *BioSpectrum* has tried to capture the essence the wanderlust of Indian biotech companies in a small way. We have featured nearly a dozen companies and this is not an exhaustive list of those who have found fame and fortune outside India. Many more active players like Jubilant Life Sciences, Bharat Biotech, Shantha Biotechniques, and many BioAgri companies too who are not part of the coverage in this issue, too have made significant strides. We hope to have a sequel to this report in the subsequent issues.

One thing is clear from this trend. Biotech companies will not limit their footprint to just India and will look outward all the time for the right opportunities. For some like Biocon, the Malaysian foray is critical to come to speed on its expansion plans and the national government there has wooed the company with the best in class infrastructure it was looking for and was not

available within India.

But is it third time lucky for the ambitious Bangalore Helix project to build a big biotech park in Bangalore? Things are moving again related to the phase 2 of Bangalore's biotech park, Bangalore Helix. The Karnataka government agency spearheading the project has received interest from five companies to handle the construction of the proposed 300,000 sq ft facility. Five years ago, the bidding process came to a standstill as only one company was left in the fray in the final stages. The second attempt two years during the economic downturn drew a blank.

If the private sector in biotech is looking outward, can the government be far behind in trying to leave behind its biotech mark globally? Certainly, the Indian government is attempting to do this in an interesting way. The chosen way is the introduce a new terminology for biological products which resemble the original innovator products.

The Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation in the Department of Biotechnology has proposed a new name, "similar biologics" to describe what is generally now known as biosimilars. In the conventional pharma industry, the products similar to the chemistry based drugs called generics. In biotech, these are called biogenerics or follow on biologics in the US, 'subsequent entry biologics' in Canada. India proposes to call these off-patented biotech drugs 'similar biologics.' With the rise of India in the global arena as an economic firehouse, I am sure, the Indian contribution of 'similar biologics' will soon become equally acceptable to the biotech ecosystem globally in a very short time.

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