

Cashing on Biosimilars

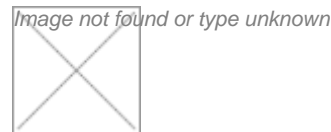
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Mr KV Subramaniam

President, Reliance Life Sciences

Reliance Life Sciences has its eyes set on the lucrative biosimilars space and is all geared up to enter the emerging nations of the world



Back in 2007, Mumbai-based Reliance Life Sciences (RLS) achieved the milestone of becoming the first Indian biopharmaceutical company to make an overseas acquisition. RLS' acquisition of the UK-based biotech company, Genemedix plc was a win-win deal for both the sides. For the former, the acquisition was a gateway to the booming biopharmaceutical market in Europe and access to Genemedix's wide product portfolio and its biopharma manufacturing facility based out of Ireland, while for the latter, the acquisition bolstered its product pipeline.

Today, Reliance Genemedix plc plays a crucial role in RLS' overall biosimilar strategy. The entity looks at the development and manufacturing of biosimilar products especially its lead EPO product, Epostim. This is but a slice of the company's two-fold global strategy – to have a direct presence in a market or go through the route of partnerships and acquisitions, both in the regulated and semi-regulated regions of the world. Nine years since it was first incorporated (in 2001), RLS has grown leaps and bounds. Apart from a strategic presence in Europe, RLS has expanded its wings, having representative offices in Singapore, Dubai, Sao Paolo, London and Houston.

Global Foothold

Throwing light on the company's game plan in the global landscape, Mr KV Subramaniam, president & CEO, RLS says, "We

are currently pursuing a multi-pronged strategy for entering global markets for our products and services. This includes direct presence in the markets as well as entering into partnerships. RLS considers exports as an important part in its growth agenda over the next three-to-five years.”

The emerging markets would be the key growth region for RLS’ global strategy over the next three years. In these markets, RLS is expecting multiple product approvals for select biopharma as well as pharma products. “These markets are growing at a faster pace compared to developed markets (like the US and EU),” adds Mr Subramaniam.

Biosimilars will be a major cash cow for the company in the coming years. The company has the largest pipeline of biosimilar products today. RLS already markets five biosimilar products in India. The strategy is to first launch these products in the Indian market, followed by a launch in other countries. RLS is already looking at launching its biosimilar product for red blood production in Europe in a couple of months. While the EU region would be the main target out of the regulated markets, in the emerging nations, India and the semi-regulated markets would be the primary focus. Reliance Genemdx plc is focusing on developing and marketing biosimilars in European markets. Apart from biosimilars, RLS also develops and markets (both in India and overseas) five plasma protein products namely ReliSeal, AlbuRel, ImmunoRel HemoRel, ReliPlasma.

Reliance Life Sciences also plans to foray into the global generic drug space under its entity Reliance Pharmaceuticals. It will produce active pharmaceuticals ingredients (APIs) and generic medicines for the international market including the US and Europe.

Future

Every international market presents a different set of challenges for any new entrant. For RLS, the key challenges were developing different product dossiers according to the regulatory requirement of each country and steering the approval process. However, having learnt the tricks of the trade and weathered the storm, the company is now geared up to enter other markets of the world. In the coming years, Mr Subramaniam reveals, the company will look at entering the Russian and CIS regions.

Nayantara Som in Mumbai