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Biocon to develop novel cancer immunotherapy

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On January 22, 2014, Biocon and US-based Advaxis, declared that they have signed an exclusive licensing agreement for the co-development and commercialization of ADXS-HPV.

ADXS-HPV is a novel cancer immunotherapy for the treatment of human papillomavirus (HPV), associated with cervical cancer in women, for India and key emerging markets.

Advaxis is a clinical-stage biotechnology company in New Jersey (US) involved in developing next generation cancer immunotherapies.

Talking about the pact, Biocon's CMD, Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said, "Biocon is committed to finding solutions for women's health issues. This partnership will enable us to develop ADXS-HPV, a novel immunotherapy to combat cervical cancer in women. It is a promising technology that has the ability to suppress the tumor inside the micro-environment, and can be leveraged for developing several other novel therapeutics to address various unmet medical needs of patients in India and other emerging markets."

According to World Health Organization (WHO), in 2008 there were over 530,000 new cases of cervical cancer worldwide, and 90% of these were reported in developing countries.

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Cervical cancer is one of the most frequent cancers in women in India. Over 366 million women over 15 years are at a risk of developing cervical cancer.

It is estimated that every year over 134,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in India, and nearly 73,000 die from this disease said the company's press release.

Mr Daniel J O'Connor, CEO, Advaxis commented, "We are excited to partner with Biocon in India to bring our innovative cancer immunotherapy for cervical cancer to women with few alternatives."

He further added, "This agreement gives us reach into key markets where the number of patients with HPV-associated cancers is overwhelming."

Under the agreement, Advaxis will provide exclusive commercialization rights for ADXS-HPV to Biocon for India, and key emerging markets for all HPV-associated cancers.

While globally there were over 300,000 deaths, the African region recorded over 50,000 deaths and Asian countries reported over 150,000 deaths for the year.
ADXS-HPV has the potential to address this huge challenge in the developing world claimed the press release on Wednesday.

Dr Abhijit Barve, president, R&D, Biocon, said, "The clinical data generated so far with ADXS-HPV look very encouraging in patients with advanced metastatic disease who were resistant or refractory to existing therapies. The clinical responses were comparable to prevalent chemotherapy agents and this was achieved with very low incidence of adverse events."

Under the terms, Advaxis will manufacture and supply ADXS-HPV to Biocon.

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