

"We are setting up a flow cytometer center of excellence in India"

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-Sunit Trivedi, general manager, Biosciences, BD India

BD India has principally been manufacturing a broad range of medical supplies, devices and diagnostics products and is also looking at strengthening its biosciences segment along with foraying into yet other new areas. BioSpectrum met Sunit Trivedi, General Manager, Biosciences, BD India, to find out the company's future areas of focus as it moves ahead. Excerpts from an interview:

What have been the revenue grossing products under the different business segments of BD India?

The medical business is a topline generator for us. There are devices, injections, needles and thus it is a big market. Under this, Venflon is one product that can be termed as a flagship brand. Also prefilled syringes are another potential segment looking at how pharma companies are looking at marketing their products.

Diagnostics is growing at 15-20 percent. Under this segment, we have a product called vacutaner, which is for blood collection that has been extensively used by us for HIV-AIDS monitoring. In India only 3 percent of it happens through vacutaners as compared to 99.9 percent in the US. So it is a huge market for us to tap. Bactec, a product for blood and TB culture and to find out septicaemia is another on the list.

Biosciences-Flow Cytometer (FACS), FALCON (labware product used in in vitro fertility clinics), PHARMIGEN (most used cell biology antibody on flowcytometer or no flow cytometer based assays)-is another key segment for us.

What have been the new products introduced this year?

Gentest is one of our new introductions. It is a product range focused on solubility and toxicology testing of drugs and is targeted mainly at pharma companies. Although it has been with BD for the last two years, it is only recently that it has been taken up by BD India. The product reduces the life cycle in terms of introducing a new drug. Once they come up with the drug they need to conduct these tests. Again a few pharma companies are using this product but we are looking at growing the customer base. We are also looking at CROs who have been operating in western countries and want to outsource this kind of testing in India. These are high value systems in the range of Rs 1-2 crore and we are in talks with few pharma companies and CSIR institutes. We expect some business this year itself.

FACSARIA is a high end sorter in the range of Rs 1.5-2 crore per system. This year we have been able to sell 11 systems to research institutions.

FACS CANTO II is a product for cancer diagnosis. It offers six color differentiation which leads to better lymphoma and leukemia diagnosis and monitoring. We are trying to set this trend in India. We have also conducted training programs for the same. We have sold six systems in the first year.

Any new products to be introduced next year?

We are into public-private partnership with Clinton Foundation and NACO for HIV AIDS under which BD helps in CD4 monitoring. To help this, we are going to introduce a product by January next year that will help predict the percentage of CD4 that is required to monitor pediatric range. It is to be used on a system called FACS count (that cannot do percentage) that can be upgraded and can help NACO sites to do percentage.

What would be the focus areas for BD India in the next few years?

Bionutrients business: A lot of companies are making forays into the vaccines business and they are not only Indian companies like Serum and Shantha Biotech, but also international companies which are setting up shop here. We have a certain product range called Bionutrients which has a very long gestation period since one has to get the right kind of FDA approval. This is something that has been on the backburner but we are going to take it up on a very massive scale for vaccine manufacturers such as Biocon. Although these are early days, we foresee that they could be big growth drivers for us in the future.

Stem cell research: A lot of basic and clinical research is happening in this area. However, stem cell therapy, the way it is done in India is subject to a question mark. The stem cells injected into the patients have to be highly pure. What is currently available is three percent purity, but what is required is above 95 percent purity. BD sees this as a research opportunity. We have high end flow cytometers, so we can sort these cells and then put it for clinical use. But we will be promoting it as a research tool, not as a clinical tool. And the basic customers as we see would be DBT, ICMR and CSIR institutes.

Cord blood banking: We have some tools in the range of flow cytometers through which we think we can address this market in the future. It is an emerging market, though nascent right now with two or three set-ups.

Live cell imaging: BD recently acquired US-based Atto biosciences and with this we think we are better equipped to address the growing market of high-content high speed live imaging. Through this we can address the needs of pharma companies and academic institutions doing cell biology based research, wherein they can scan hundreds of live images in a few minutes

thus reducing time.

Are you looking at any investments in training?

We are setting up a Center of Excellence in India for flow cytometer along with an institute by the end of this year. BD will do the entire training for customers for high end flow cytometers. We also conduct training within the organization in our training center. We sell, but it is our responsibility to educate the customers and this is one reason why we feel customers buy from us. This initiative will only take that vision a step further.

Shalini Gupta