

Reliance Life Sciences bets big on biosimilars

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RELIANCE Life Sciences (RLS), a company promoted by Reliance Industries' chairman, Mukesh Ambani, is looking at biopharmaceuticals as a huge thrust area. The company recently launched its fourth biosimilar product, TP A Reteplase. Biopharmaceuticals are medical drugs produced using biotechnology.

"RLS has the deepest biosimilar pipeline in the industry globally said the company's president & CEO, KV Subramaniam. TP A is the fourth biosimilar product from the company and more product launches are in the pipeline, he said. The three products that have been in the market for a while are erythropoietin, GCSF and interferon alpha. Biocon, Wockhardt, Shantha Biotech, Panacea Biotech and Intas are some of RLS' competitors in the Indian market.

It is estimated that the Indian biopharmaceutical market is close to \$1 billion in size -- this includes the domestic market and the market for exports.

"There are three more product launches in the offing over the next one year," said Mr Subramaniam. Apart from the four products that have been launched, an equal number is in clinical development and five are at the pre-clinical development stage. The company is in the midst of conducting trials for clinical products in the European Union (EU). In addition to biopharmaceuticals, RLS has a presence in areas like pharmaceuticals, clinical research services, regenerative medicine and molecular medicine. "Today, 70% of our topline are accounted for by biopharmaceuticals," he added. For RLS, biopharmaceuticals encompasses research, development, manufacturing and marketing of products in the areas of plasma proteins, recombinant proteins and fusion proteins.

Mr Subramaniam declined to share details on RLS' investments, revenues and profitability. "Substantial investments have gone into the business, which are now paying off," he said. The company has been exporting biopharmaceuticals to markets that are semi-regulated since 2006. This is expected to significantly expand in terms of geographical reach over the next 2-3 years.

RLS was incorporated in 2001 and operates the country's largest mammalian cell culture facility. Its UK subsidiary, Reliance GeneMedix, which has a manufacturing facility in Ireland, develops biosimilars for the European market.

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GOING GLOBAL

The company is planning to expand biopharmaceutical exports over the next two to three years

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