


Publication : The Times of India (online)
Date : October 06, 2020
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THE TIMES OF INDIA
BUSINESS

Reliance Life Sciences joins hunt for Covid-19 vaccine

Rupali Mukherjee | TNN | Updated: Oct 6, 2020, 21:43 IST



MUMBAI: Reliance Life Sciences has become the latest company to enter the fray for developing a potential Covid-19 vaccine, which will be entering pre-clinical animal studies this month. The Reliance group plans to leverage its existing businesses-- pharmaceuticals, retail and technology, for Covid-19, right from developing test kits, operating testing laboratory, to vaccine development, manufacturing and even distribution.

The vaccine under development is a recombinant protein-based Covid-19 vaccine, and is expected to enter human trials in the first quarter, Q12021.

Reliance Life Sciences (RLS), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries, joins six domestic pharma companies including Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute and Zydus Cadila, who have been granted regulatory approvals to develop a vaccine against Coronavirus, even as the number of cases crossed the 66 lakh mark in the country.

When contacted, KV Subramaniam, president and CEO, Reliance Life Sciences told TOI: "Pre-clinical small animal studies will be conducted by the in-house, animal research facility, as well as by partner research organisations. Human clinical research will also be conducted through the company's in-house research services organization".

Distribution of vaccines of Reliance Life Sciences, as well as of other partners, is planned to be leveraged through its group businesses, Reliance Retail and Reliance Jio. Both organizations have a pan-India footprint reaching every village in the country. Reliance Retail product distribution system caters to 11,784 stores and about 200 cities, and Reliance Jio digital services encompasses 6,000 physical customer touchpoints. Details will be worked out closer to the launch of vaccines in the country.

Besides, RLS has developed and started manufacture of Molecular Transport Medium (MTM) for collection and transportation of Covid-19 swab samples, after receiving regulatory approvals. MTM inactivates the virus within the sample and stabilizes the RNA, to make collection, transportation and processing safer. It also obviates the need for a cold chain in transportation of samples. In contrast, the conventional Viral Transport Medium may not be safe, as the virus is active in the collection tube, and also requires cold chain (2 to 8 deg C) transportation, a RLS official explained.

Further, Reliance Industries' RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) kits for Covid-19 were validated by Indian Council of Medical Research. The diagnostic kits are expected to be competitively priced, and commercialized by year-end.

With the scale-up in manufacturing now, prices of RT-PCR kits have reduced to around Rs 500-700 each.

In Video: [Covid-19: Reliance Life Sciences joins race for corona vaccine](#)