

# Reliance Life Sciences enters anti-cancer market

Reliance Life Sciences introduces six anti-cancer drug brands in India, including a generic version of Glivec

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The screenshot shows the Reliance Life Sciences website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Careers, Downloads, Contact Us, and a dropdown for Group Sites. The main header features the Reliance Life Sciences logo and a quote: "Vision of attaining global leadership through innovative and cost-effective solutions for a better life." Below the header, there is a central banner with the text "Building an India-based global specialty pharmaceuticals business" and an image of a scientist in a lab coat working with laboratory equipment. To the left of the banner is a vertical menu with categories: Biopharmaceuticals, Pharmaceuticals, Clinical Research Services, Regenerative Medicine, Cord Blood Repository, and Molecular Medicine. To the right is another vertical menu with categories: Reliance Inst. of Life Sciences, Infrastructure, Patents and Publications, Accreditations, Media, and Products and Services. At the bottom of the page, there are advertisements for AlbuReli Plasma volume expander and ReliTrexed. The footer contains a disclaimer: "This site is best viewed with a resolution of 1024x768 (or higher), supports Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0 (or higher) and Adobe Flash Player 9.0 (or higher)." and copyright information: "© 2009 Reliance Life Sciences. All Rights Reserved."

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**Mumbai:** Reliance Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd has introduced six anti-cancer drug brands in India, including a generic version of Swiss drugmaker **Novartis AG**'s anti-blood cancer drug **Glivec**, as it seeks to tap the fast-growing market for oncology drugs in the country.

Oncology, or the branch of medicine dealing with cancer, is expected to emerge as one of the largest therapeutic segments in the domestic market in five years, **Reliance** Life Sciences' president and chief executive **K.V. Subramaniam** said in an email. "Oncology is the leading therapeutic class in the global pharmaceutical market today," said Subramaniam, adding that the company is targeting both the domestic and export markets.

"For the domestic market, Reliance Life Sciences has set up a separate division for marketing oncology formulations. For

international markets, it will pursue partnerships with pharmaceutical companies for commercialization of these products," he added.

Reliance Life Sciences is seeking to tap a market for oncology drugs that, globally, is estimated to grow from \$80 billion (around Rs.4.9 trillion today) in 2012 to about \$110 billion in five years.

In India, the anti-cancer drug market touched about Rs.2,000 crore in fiscal 2013, and is forecast to grow to Rs.3,831 crore by fiscal 2017, according to consultancy firm **Frost and Sullivan**.

The six drugs Reliance Life Sciences has introduced are therapies for cancers that affect the brain, colon, lungs, white blood cells and the rectum that have been identified as the most prevalent globally as well as in India. The current market size for drugs treating these cancers is estimated to be in the range of \$40-\$50 billion. Reliance Life Sciences, a privately held company, did not share details of its sales or profit targets.



The **Mukesh Ambani** group company recently built commercial-scale plants for manufacturing active pharmaceutical ingredients, or APIs, and formulations for oncology medicines at its Rabale campus in Navi Mumbai.

India had 2.8 million prevalent cases of all types of cancer in 2012, while at least 800,000 new cases come up every year, Frost and Sullivan said in an India oncology market study released in May.

"Oncology will be a key area of growth in India's healthcare sector. With increase in emphasis on health coverage both by central and state governments, spending on coverage of medicines for oncology will see substantial rise in three-five years," **Ajaykumar Sharma**, Frost and Sullivan's associate director (pharma, lifescience and healthcare practice), wrote in the report.

Reliance Life Sciences can take advantage of its existing marketing network with hospitals, said industry experts.

"Reliance Life has already established strong marketing network with leading hospitals across the country for its stem cell-based and tissue engineered therapeutic products. Since oncology is mainly a hospital-based business, the company can make better use of this sales network," said a corporate consultant and adviser in the pharma and healthcare area with a global consultancy firm. He didn't want to be identified because he isn't supposed to comment on individual companies.

"The biological research strength that it has built in-house for stem cell-based therapies, would also help extend its cancer drug portfolio, especially in the biosimilar space," said this consultant.

Biosimilars are generic versions of biopharmaceutical products. Reliance Life Sciences attempted to enter the generic pharmaceuticals market in India and abroad in 2010 but dropped the plan due to adverse market conditions.

Competition is tough in India's anti-cancer drug market, in which several foreign and local drugmakers are offering a range of patented and generic drugs after the government reduced taxes and import duties to ensure the availability of affordable oncology drugs.

The logo for live mint.com, with "live" in white and "mint.com" in orange on a dark orange background.



India also issued its first compulsory licence in February 2012 to allow Hyderabad-based **Natco Pharma Ltd** to manufacture and sell a cheaper version of German drugmaker **Bayer HealthCare AG**'s patented lung cancer drug **Nexavar** (sorafenib) locally.

The health ministry has now proposed to issue a compulsory licence for another cancer drug, **Sprycel** (dasatinib), patented by US drugmaker **Bristol-Myers Squibb Co**.

Swiss drugmaker **F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd**, a multinational drugmaker that specializes in cancer therapies, had last year cut prices of three key cancer drugs in India following increased competition from generic drugmakers in the local market. Local drugmakers including **Cipla Ltd** had also cut prices of generic cancer drugs in the third quarter of fiscal 2013.

**Roche**, which relinquished its patent right for its breast cancer drug **Herceptin** in May, has already entered a local manufacturing partnership to reduce costs and expand the market reach for its cancer drugs. "We have already introduced a local pricing and branding structure, in partnership with the local company, for a number of our cancer drugs, including Herceptin, and are currently reviewing the impact of this programme," a Roche spokesman said earlier.