

Does novel biologics R&D lack funding & academic collaboration?

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Experts discuss the future of biologics landscape in India, at the 4th edition of the Biosimilar Workshop that took place on 2 & 3 February 2023

Institute of Chemical Technology's "Biosimilar Workshop", one of the largest gatherings of Biopharmaceutical Researchers in India held on 2nd and 3rd February 2023 at Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia Resort, held a special focus on the future of biologics.

A panel discussion was organised with participation from Kavitha Iyer Rodrigues, Chief Executive Officer, Zumutor Biologics, who was the moderator, along with Dr Nitin Damle, Executive Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer, Sun Pharma Advanced Research Company; Dr Raghavan Varadarajan from the Indian Institute of Science; Dr Prabuddha Kumar Kundu, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Premas Biotech; Dr Pradip Nair, Chief Scientific Manager, Biocon Research; Dr Manjula Das, Principal Investigator, Mazumdar Shaw Medical Foundation Managing Director at Beyond Antibody and Dr Uma Sinha Datta, Fast Trak Global Training Manager & India Leader, Cytiva.

The panel discussion started with a question raised by Dr Kavitha on India's contribution to novel biologics and funding strategies.

Dr Nitin Damle mentioned that within biologics, novel biologics represent a bigger opportunity and the segment is promising. According to him, the novel biologics market is anticipated to touch \$350 billion by 2030. He also mentioned that in the last 10-15 years, there has been an explosion of biosimilars.

Adding to this, Dr Kundu gave his critical thoughts about academia. He mentioned that though academics are playing a huge role, however, something is amiss. "There remains a void which is a challenging task for all the stakeholders. Funding from government agencies is good to go with but the golden rule is that you have to work within their terms. In this case, alternative funding resources need to remain in place. With risk remaining, looking out for the right funding is a challenge of its own."

Another interesting observation was made by Dr Manjula Das stating that, "There needs to be extensive biology knowledge, and knowledge of the disease, that is lacking. The more respect among various agencies, it will remain a win-win situation for all."

"Novel biologics need innovation and we do a lot of research, however, it doesn't reach patients and this is where funding is

important. Stakeholders should look for smarter process development, and get more with less number of experiments", said Dr Uma Sinha Datta.

Well, this discussion is indeed happening around the right time when the government's budget allocation for development of pharma industry has been increased this year. Impact of this will be that there will be new programmes to promote pharma R&D through centres of excellence. However, we would await clarity on where exactly these additional funds are going to be used and how the nation progresses better with innovative drugs.

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Image caption: (L-R) Dr Pradip Nair (Biocon Research); Dr Nitin Damle (Sun Pharma Advanced Research Company); Dr Prabuddha Kumar Kundu (Premas Biotech), Dr Uma Sinha Datta (Cytiva) and Dr Manjula Das (Mazumdar Shaw Medical Foundation).