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Weak pipeline means future Schizophrenia market may look to treatment for similar indications

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Although the schizophrenia market is replete with unmet needs and its pipeline is paltry, the overall level of innovation for schizophrenia-related indications - which comprise depression, panic disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and cognitive deficit - is far higher, and has the potential to provide some benefit to patients with schizophrenia, says business intelligence provider GBI Research.

According to the company's latest report, the large population of schizophrenia patients in relation to its small pipeline of 134 products is indicative of a low level of investment in Research and Development (R&D), most likely due to a poor understanding of the underlying disease mechanisms.

This acts as a strong barrier to the development of effective pharmaceutical products.

Mr Dominic Trewartha, Managing Analyst for GBI Research, explains: "While current treatments offer some relief from symptoms such as hallucinations, they have not proven as effective for cognitive dysfunction and symptoms such as the inability to feel pleasure, and there are no disease-modifying drugs currently available. A number of combinations, such as the addition of adjuvant agents to antipsychotic medication, have been trialed, but they have had little impact."

There are 360 products in the pipeline for conditions associated with schizophrenia, 60 of which are first-in-class, equating to 21% of products with a disclosed molecular target.

Overall, while the proportion of first-in-class products is still low, there are more in the pipeline for schizophrenia-related

indications, particularly depressions and cognitive deficit, than there are for schizophrenia itself, and these act across a far wider range of molecular targets.

Mr Trewartha continues: "The range of innovation is relatively diverse in the pipelines for schizophrenia and related indications, with products acting on numerous novel molecular targets, including D-Amino Acid Oxidase, glutamate carboxypeptidase 2, and a number of probable G protein-coupled receptors.

"It is likely that small molecules will remain clinically and commercially the most successful molecule types across many therapy areas and indications, being particularly relevant in the central nervous system (CNS) and schizophrenia, with only limited prospects that new product approvals could change the landscape.

"Despite industry-wide trends towards a diversification in therapeutic molecule types, it is unlikely that this will be translated in CNS disorders and schizophrenia, due to the challenges of crossing the blood-brain barrier with larger and more complex molecular types."