

India turns to Ayurveda to curb dengue

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Indian drug giant Sun Pharma has inked a deal with global non-profit International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) to develop a novel botanical drug that can combat the menace of dengue.

The drug, Cipa, has its roots in traditional Ayurvedic medicine. The project is backed and supported by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Ministry of Science and Technology. The Cipa drug also aims to push towards traditional medicine by the current government, as acknowledged by Dr Khanna and Dr Altaf Lal, senior advisor with Sun Pharma.

The eight year long research is led by Dr Naveen Khanna of the ICGEB. Speaking to the media Mr Khanna said, "It is high time that India wake up and create these drugs with the help of modern science. USFDA approved four botanical drugs from China last year. Four years from now, India could have a pill for curative and even preventive dengue therapy."

Nearly 10,000 cases of dengue were reported from the national capital last year in one of the worst ever outbreaks of dengue in the country. The drug, Dr khanna explained, is derived from the plant *Cissampelos pareira* Linn, commonly known as abuta, and laghu patha in ayurveda. Its extract has shown to inhibit all four strains of dengue (DENVs).

The team from both the ICGEB and Sun Pharma lay much emphasis on supporting any "holistic" medicine with the clinical trials of modern science, so that, as Dr Khanna said, such a drug could be prescribed by all doctors, not just AYUSH practitioners. Drugs under AYUSH, with no such clinical trials can only be prescribed by AYUSH doctors.