

Urgent need to increase R&D investment

According to a report by S&P Global Ratings, Indian pharma firms need to increase investments in research and development and quality of manufacturing to comply with global regulatory standards and take on competition.

The companies that continue to invest in meeting compliance standards while growing are likely to emerge stronger over the longer term, thanks to their still-healthy margins, low leverage, and support from promoters.

As per the report titled 'Indian Pharma Companies Need To Pass The Trials, But Can They Shape Up?', the rating agency does not expect any let up in the scrutiny of Indian pharma companies by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

These companies will therefore need to strengthen systems and controls to effectively address regulatory issues, the report said.

The pricing pressure will continue to hurt the operating and financial performance of Indian pharma firms due to intensified competition among generics companies and continued consolidation of distribution channels in the US, it added.

Less than one doctor for 1000 population in India

India has less than one doctor for every 1000 population which is less than the World Health Organisation standard, Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel has said.

As per information provided by the Medical Council of India, there were a total 10,22,859 allopathic doctors registered with the state medical councils or Medical Council of India as on March 31 this year. It gives a doctor-population ratio of 0.62:1000 as per current population which is estimated to be of around 1.33 billion.

The WHO prescribes a doctor population ratio of 1:1000. The doctor-population ratio of the some of the countries are: Australia - 3.374:1000, Brazil - 1.852:1000, China - 1.49:1000, France - 3.227:1000, Germany - 4.125:1000, Russia - 3.306:1000, the USA - 2.554:1000, Afghanistan - 0.304:1000, Bangladesh - 0.389:1000, Pakistan - 0.806:1000.

Govt plans to sell generic medicines at fuel stations

The government is working on opening 'Jan Aushadhi' (generic medicines) stores at petrol pumps belonging to state-run fuel retailers across the country with a view to make cheap drugs accessible to masses.

This is after the fuel retailers inked MoU with Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) for selling energy-efficient appliances and LED bulbs from petrol pumps.

But shortage of qualified pharmacists have emerged as a problem. Under law, drug stores need to have qualified pharmacists. While most of the private drug stores list such pharmacists, they are seldom present. As government entity that situation in unthinkable. But the officials were hopeful of finding a way and said it will also open job opportunities.

Plan to waive off clinical trials on humans for critical drugs

In a move to make innovative medicines available for critical diseases like HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis, the health ministry plans to waive off clinical trials in humans for select drugs which are essential for Indian patients and were approved in developed markets like the US, European Union, Japan, Canada and Australia at least two years ago.

Though such waivers are still approved by the drug regulator on case to case basis, the ministry now plans to bring in legal provisions under the proposed rules for clinical trials. This will enable the regulator set a standard procedure and criteria for approvals. The health ministry has sent the proposed rules to the law ministry for vetting.

Initially the proposal was to waive off clinical trials for all drugs which are available in these developed markets for at least two years. However, this was met with objections during deliberations by the Drugs and Technical Advisory Board.