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Eisai to launch breast cancer drug in India

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Singapore: With an agenda to expand its footprint in the emerging markets, Japan's Eisai Pharma is launching its novel anti-cancer drug Eribulin, sold under the brand name of Halaven in India.

The drug, used in the treatment of third line metastatic breast cancer, increases the life expectancy of the patients in the last stage of cancer.

Eisai has said that it would experiment with differential pricing within India.

"It is a new approach to affordable pricing. We used fixed low-pricing with Aricept (a drug that treats symptoms of Alzheimers). Here we have five tiers, from full-pricing to price zero," said Sayoko Sasaki, corporate officer, vice-president, Eisai.

As per the company, the various patient group categories are the lower income group that will get the drug for free, the middle income patients who would be eligible for discounts on the full pricing, the rich patients who will be asked to pay full price, followed by those who are covered under insurance schemes.

"Before, our business model focused on the top two tiers. We can do business with them, but since access to medicine is quite important to us, we want to expand this to middle-income and low-income class. By doing so, we can satisfy the people in India, and also make the business model sustainable," Sasaki added.

Speaking about the IP conditions in India, the company's corporate officer for Asia region, Yuji Matsue said, "We believe that IP is important, fair competition is important, but access to medicine is more important in developing or emerging countries. Therefore, at this moment, we are thinking that it is very important to provide a novel product for affordable price."

He added that the company's strategy to make profits with differential pricing will become key in emerging markets.