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Mumbai: Cipla, India's leading pharmaceutical company, launched Qvir, a novel four-drug kit for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. The kit consists of two tablets, one containing a combination of Tenofovir plus Emtricitabine and the other containing a combination of Atazanavir plus Ritonavir. Both these tablets are packaged together in one strip which represents a single day's treatment.

Qvir is a first line treatment option and can also be used as a second line of treatment in cases which have been treated by a specific combination therapy, commonly used in India. Studies of this combination regimen have shown that it is effective and well tolerated by over 80 percent of patients using it.

The Qvir Kit is manufactured in Cipla's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Patalganga, which is approved by international regulatory bodies. It will cost $3 (Rs158) per kit and is presently available in the market. As the tablets are packaged together in one strip, the patient does not have to remember which tablet he took and cannot mistakenly take two of the same tablet. Also, the patient cannot run out of any one of the tablets. The strips are also convenient to carry, in case the patient needs to travel.

Commenting on the introduction of Qvir Kit, Dr Y K Hamied, chairman and MD, Cipla, said that, "While we are committed to making drugs affordable and accessible, we also endeavour to have more options for HIV infected patients, which are potent, effective, patient-friendly and easy to take."

Cipla has been recognized worldwide not only for introducing HIV/AIDS treatment at a fraction of the international prices, but also for pioneering the three-in-one combinations such as Triomune (Stavudine + Lamivudine + Nevirapine); Duovir-N

(Zidovudine + Lamivudine + Nevirapine) in 2001; and Trioday (Tenofovir + Lamivudine + Efavirenz) in 2009.

Further, Cipla's introduction of the Duovir-E Kit (Ziodovudine + Lamivudine + Efavirenz) in 2004 and the Odivir Kit (Didanosine + Lamivudine + Efavirenz) in 2003 were significant contributions towards managing and living with HIV/AIDS.

According to reports, the number of HIV infected people continues to grow. At the end of 2010, about 34 million people were living with HIV and there were 2.7 million new infections in that year. HIV patients have to take multiple medicines lifelong. Every year about five-to-10 percent of patients fail their first line treatment due to various reasons such as missing doses and the virus developing resistance.