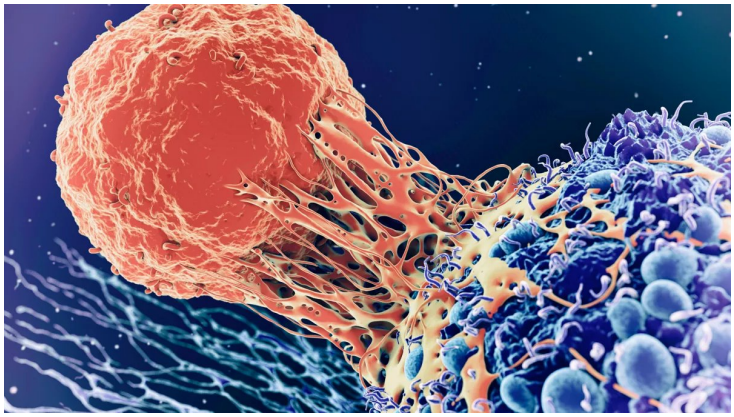
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ASIA EDITION

Serum Institute of India partners with Univercells to make personalised cancer treatments more accessible

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The therapies can reach patients in Europe, India and the African continent



Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, has joined forces with Univercells, a Belgian biotech innovator, targeting a dramatic increase in accessibility to personalised cancer care. This partnership aims to bring cutting edge treatment options within reach of millions globally.

At present, personalised care options such as novel cancer vaccines and specialized immunotherapies are accessible to a few patients only. These new therapies are developed using genetic material extracted from the patient's tumors, a process which is both time-consuming, and expensive.

Besides, due to strict regulatory limitations on the sequence, transfer, and manufacturing of genetic material, these treatments are only available in a handful of countries. This collaboration between SII and Univercells will help in addressing these challenges, with a view to capturing a proportion of the global cancer care market.

Dr Umesh Shaligram, Executive Director, R&D, SII said, "Relapse rates for many cancers are very high, especially for patients who are diagnosed at a later stage. To address this, we are developing unique point-of-care cancer treatment using mRNA in combination with our Recombinant BCG (VPM1002)."

"Our technology can cut months off the time to create a personalized therapeutic without compromising quality." said José Castillo, Chief Technology Officer & co-founder of Univercells. "We've completely redesigned the manufacturing process from first principles and believe that we can save up to 90% of costs of producing these medicines compared to traditional approaches."

Longer term, Univercells and SII believe that they may be able to dramatically accelerate the progress of new medicines. At present, the average time for a cancer therapy to go from patenting to use by patients is close to 15 years in the UK.

"Our target is to reduce that delay to just 3 years." said José Castillo. "We have many barriers to overcome, but because we can automate the system, we believe we can produce personalized therapeutics which still meet the highest standards of quality and are acceptable to the regulators."