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ASIA EDITION

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March 14, 2012 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Aceclofenac injection, launched under the brandname of Achnil, by Venues RemediesÃ?Â is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to relieve acute and chronic pain and inflammation in rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, low back pain, ankylosing spondylitis, dental pain, post-traumatic pain, gynecological pain and oncology pain.

The product, which has won BioSpectrum Asia Pacific Bioscience Industry Product of the Year Award in 2012, is designed in such a way that it is never released in super or sub-therapeutic zones and hence is highly safe and practically free from side effects.

With over 1.5 billion people worldwide suffering from chronic pain of varying degrees, the global market for pain management is predicted to reach $60 billion by 2015. Among all types of chronic pain, neuropathic pain stands as a highly underserved market. Approximately, 3-to-4.5 percent of the global population suffers from neuropathic pain, with incidence rate increase tied to aging. With increasing aging-population and absence of a full-fledged pain management therapy, demand for better pain management therapies is on the rise.

Venues Remedies, an Indian pharmaceutical company based in Himachal Pradesh, developed Aceclofenac injection to address this unmet need. The company also has a base in Germany.

Aceclofenac is a radical innovation of Venus Medicine Research Centre. It is a single-shot injection launched in July 2011 in India. The novel formulation based on novel drug delivery system (NDDS) technology will meet the need for a long-standing demand for better pain management therapies, especially for the aged population. It will not only reduce the number of pricks but also drastically reduce the side effects associated with the use of NSAIDs.

Achnil acts directly by giving instant relief from acute pain and is effective for the next 24 hours against the conventional daily dose of three injections of diclofenac given every eight hours. The product is available across India and is sold at a premium price.

Achnil, categorized under the NSAIDs, is a first-of-its-kind product as it is a controlled-release injectable. The invention holds its value for providing immense relief due to an immediate drug release and thereafter maintaining the effect for upto 24 hours. Achnil aims not only at reducing the frequency of dose but also the dose regimen, further ensuring a prolonged therapeutic effect. It is a powerful anti-inflammatory agent and an analgesic product with low incidence of side effects in the management of inflammatory disease. The once-daily administration of the drug reduces drug-induced toxicity. In addition, the product has many attributes adequately substantiated by the pre-clinical and clinical evidence.

The R&D team of the company comprising 30 scientists took more than eight years of dedicated efforts to bring this product from the concept stage to the stable, commercialization stage. In view of all the studies which have been conducted till date, the company has incurred an estimated expenditure of $0.2 million for the product development alone, excluding patent and regulatory expenses.

On the factors that led to the development of the product, Dr Manu Chaudhary, director, research and joint managing director, Venus Remedies, says, "Our company, as an R&D strategy, practices the concept of translational medicine, which is bed-to-benchside and return. The drawbacks of the currently available regimes in the acute-to-chronic pain management were evaluated in depth, and with that conception a product was formulated which could surmount the ascertained fallacies. This was how the notion of Achnil came into existence. Envisaging, the existence of huge unmet medical needs in terms of a safe, efficacious and long acting drug for pain management, the innovative product Achnil is able to cater to all the needs."

Venus has secured patents from India as well as from Europe for Achnil, which are valid till 2025. It plans to launch Achnil in other markets worldwide including major European economies such as Germany, UK, France, Spain, Sweden, Italy and Switzerland. The US represents the largest regional market for pain management worldwide, followed by Europe, as stated by a new market research report on pain management. Increasing aging population worldwide, growing number of surgical procedures being performed, changing lifestyles, and increasing incidences of cancer are some of the factors driving growth in the pain management sector.

Achnil has received an overwhelming response from the market within a few months of its market launch. The product has proved to be a boom in the acute-to-chronic pain management space and has the capability to turn out to be an illustrious product. Reduction in post-surgical adhesions has been the most welcomed effect by the medical fraternity. On the future plans, Dr Manu Chaudhary says, "Having attained a patent grant from Europe, we are planning to launch the product in Europe by extending exclusive marketing rights to a competent partner having marketing muscles in Europe and the US.

Profiles of other winners

Selection criteria