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'Biosimilar Drugs can Help us Reach \$1b Target Soon'



Biocon Biologics is racing ahead with its

biosimilar portfolio as the company is hopeful of achieving its revenue target by FY22. With a portfolio of products lined up, **Christiane Hamacher**, the CEO, in an interview to **Divya Rajagopal**, said that the company's revenue target of \$1 billion looks doable as it aims to reach 5 million patients under its various biosimilar drugs. The company is also looking at repurposing drugs from its portfolio for Covid-19. Edited excerpts:

With the approval of the Semglee (the insulin drug) what next for your biosimilar pipeline?

It is all about reaching our \$1 billion revenue target by FY22 and to reach 5 million patients by end of 2022. We have several molecules in the pipeline already and we will strengthen that further. In addition to the products that we have launched so far, bevacizumab, for solid tumor, is under review by the USFDA, and that will strengthen our oncology portfolio. Two additional insulins are under development for the US, and other parts of the world. With an insulin analog and a human recombinant insulin programme, we have a portfolio of insulins. Together we will have three insulins and this is a strong position to be in. Very few companies are focusing on insulin and insulin analogue. We will have eight biosimilars in the market by 2022 which will help us reach the 1\$-billion mark.

Biologic drugs are taking a new meaning during Covid-19. Considering your expertise in this field are you looking at your portfolio for repurposing drugs for Covid-19?

Yes, we are looking at our existing portfolio and

looking at molecules for repurposing them. We have repurposed Cytosorb (used in ICU patients). Another drug Itolizumab is under trial and we are looking for data.

There are reports that say Tocilizumab is helping in dealing with the cytokine storm that hits Covid patients.

Itolizumab is the molecule that we have developed, and it is a novel molecule; it is under trial for Covid-19.

This is the drug used for psoriasis. So, we will see how the clinical trial and other data play out. It will be discussed with regulators and we will see how to take it forward.

How does the mechanism work?

We are looking at patients with moderate and severe Covid-19 implications. So, patients with severe Covid-19 face cytokine storm. Our drug binds to a surface molecule of the immune system, called CD6 receptor, and it, therefore, inhibits the activation of T cells, and by that you don't get the cytokine storm that would increase the inflammatory level. So, it, therefore, blocks the cytokine storm. That is a different mode of action compared to an IL6 inhibitor. The clinical trial has been initiated at multiple hospitals in Mumbai and Delhi post approvals from DCGI. It is being studied for the prevention and treatment of cytokine release syndrome. Trial results are expected in mid-July.

