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It's Coming Home: ImmunoACT Advances Plans For Cut-Price CAR-T In India

by Anju Ghangurde

ImmunoACT CEO Dr Rahul Purwar outlines progress made by the firm's early-stage CAR-T therapy in India, which he believes can be available at a tenth of the price of current on-market treatments or around the cost range for bone marrow transplant. Laurus Labs, which holds about 27% in ImmunoACT, is expected to help shape the firm's globalization plans.

The prohibitive cost of current CAR-T cell therapies puts them beyond the reach of most patients in the developing world and ImmunoACT founder and CEO Dr Rahul Purwar hopes to rewrite that script.



ImmunoACT has a portfolio of CAR-T therapy assets in various development stages for the treatment of autoimmune diseases and oncology indications, with its lead product HCAR 19 being studied in multiple indications including B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia and diffuse large B cell lymphoma. The CD-19 CAR-T is nearing completion of Phase I trials and the firm is on course with the regulatory process to commence Phase II studies.

Last year the Hyderabad-based [Laurus Labs Ltd.](#) acquired close to 27% in ImmunoACT. (Also see "[Asia Deal Watch: Astellas Looks To Next-Gen AAV Vectors Despite Gene Therapy Clinical Setbacks](#)" - Scrip, 3 Dec, 2021.)

Purwar says he is confident that ImmunoACT will be able to deliver its indigenously developed CAR-T therapy at one tenth the cost of currently available products – an estimated price of

around INR3m(\$38,323). [Gilead Sciences, Inc.](#)'s Yescarta (axicabtagene ciloleucel), for instance, had a 2017 US list price of \$373,000 while [Novartis AG](#)'s Kymriah(tisagenlecleucel) comes at a \$475,000-per-patient sticker price.

'Our aim is to make the CAR-T as affordable as possible and bring the cost almost equivalent to bone marrow transplant - one of the other modalities where cell therapy is used. If we bring the CAR-T cost in that range, many Indians can afford it," Purwar explained. Opportunities to take ImmunoACT's CAR-T therapy to markets like South Africa and Mexico are also being explored.

If ImmunoACT, or any other Indian firm (see side bar), does manage to deliver on their pricing promise it could well be transformational, at least as things stand today and perhaps akin to what [Cipla Limited](#) did in 2001 in the HIV/AIDS segment, though the two situations are not entirely like-to-like. Cipla had offered its three-in-one fixed dose combination (stavudine + lamivudine + nevirapine) at less than \$1 per day compared to over \$12,000 per patient per year prevailing in most countries at the time.

Purwar also shares insights on ImmunoACT's connect with US cancer cell therapy pioneer Dr Carl June, who is part of the firm's scientific advisory board. There's more on this topic and others in the podcast.

What's Next At Dr Reddy's: Biologics CDMO, Cell And Gene Therapy Push

By [Anju Ghangurde](#)

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Indian firms are getting their act together in areas like cell and gene therapy, with Dr Reddy's aiming big and readying a facility alongside an alliance with a Chinese firm for a CAR-T therapy. The company is also doubling down in contract development and manufacturing, with an eye on opportunities in biologics.

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(Also see "[Gene And Cell Therapies In Asia: Indian Environment Evolving But Multiple Issues Unresolved](#)" - Scrip, 29 Sep, 2019.)

(Also see "[Early Indian Promise For A Cut-Price CAR-T Therapy](#)" - Scrip, 7 Oct, 2019.)

(Also see "[Dr Reddy's Pilots Sputnik V Soft Launch In India, Explores CAR-T Space](#)" - Scrip, 17 May, 2021.)

