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1. [Drug regulatory infra gets Rs 1,750 cr](#) – Business Standard

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It is short-sighted to view patents as blocking access to life-saving drugs, or to see patented medicines and generic drugs as mutually exclusive. The latter exist because someone invested in research and innovation to invent the former. A robust intellectual property rights (IPR) framework promotes the development of new medicines and encourages investment in innovation.

Innovative medicines offer great hope to patients, but developing new treatments and cures is a long, costly, and complex process. Life-saving drugs are necessary for combating life-threatening diseases, but patients also need new drugs and solutions for changing disease profiles. There are still huge unmet medical needs and therapeutic areas that need to be addressed with innovation-driven cures. We need to continue research in cancer, diabetes and mental illnesses. Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and dengue still have no cure.

Clearly, there must be access to medicines for everybody but, equally, if there isn't a return on investment, how will innovators justify investing in new medicines? India needs to ensure a favourable policy environment that supports continued research and development of new medicines through a system of patents.

Protecting intellectual property will help bring new solutions for rare diseases and new medicines, to save and improve lives.

While we must improve access to healthcare for Indian patients, we should understand what this access means. An IMS study finds that access starts with the proximity, quality and functionality of healthcare infrastructure. Accurate diagnosis is often more important than the price of medicine.

More than affordability, another barrier to access is the inability to pay out-of-pocket and the lack of insurance cover. To improve access, we need sustainable policy solutions to support healthcare financing, infrastructure and human resource challenges.

Certainly, a weakened IP environment or Compulsory Licences (CLs) cannot address India's healthcare problems. Under Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), CLs are used in exceptional circumstances, and as a last resort. Under Section 92 of the Indian Patents Act, CLs come into play in situations such as national emergency and public health crises. Used arbitrarily, CLs will serve to undermine the innovative pharmaceutical industry, to the long-term detriment of the patient.

We need a different dialogue on the subject of making life-saving drugs affordable in India. There is no question that everybody should have access to all medicines. Where patented products are largely beyond the reach of Indian patients, companies have robust programmes to make them available for free or for a fraction of their price. Multinational companies are considering differentiated pricing schemes for developing countries. Today, patients are living longer and healthier lives, thanks to innovative medicines from research-based companies. In many cases, these medicines are their only chance for survival.

Ranjana Smetacek is director general, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India. The views expressed are personal.

IPR & Innovation

1. [India, US to hold key commercial dialogue next month](#) – Times of India

India and the US will hold first-ever high-level strategic and commercial dialogue next month in Washington focusing on areas such as ease of doing business and smart cities with an aim to boost investment and raise bilateral trade five-fold to US \$ 500 billion annually. "The Strategic and Commercial Dialogue (S&CD) will be held in Washington DC in 6-7 weeks," US under secretary of commerce for international trade Stefan M Selig told reporters here. He is in town to meet with commerce secretary Rita Teatoria for the preparatory talks.

Access to Healthcare

1. [Costing and financing strategies are the key to healthcare for all](#) – Hindu Business Line

Needed, a framework that ensures efficiency of health systems to contain costs but flexible enough to assimilate advances in technology and clinical processes. Healthcare expenditure accounts for 9 per cent of global GDP and is seeing an increasing trend over decades. This has been broadly driven by economic growth, advances in medical technology and ageing populations. The swing to chronic and lifestyle diseases has led to increasing healthcare spend. This presents challenges for governments across the world to contain the spiralling costs.

Regulatory & Medical

1. [Drug regulatory infra gets Rs 1,750 cr](#) – Business Standard

With rising instances of quality scrutiny faced by Indian pharmaceutical companies in foreign markets, the government on Wednesday okayed Rs 1,750 crore to strengthen the drug regulatory system. The money will be spent to set up testing laboratories and a training academy for regulatory and testing officials, among other things. The decision by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs says Rs 900 crore will be used to strengthen the central structures and Rs 850 crore made available to state governments. Much of state-level drug regulatory infrastructure lacks upgradation due to lack of funds.

Others

1. [In the forefront of fight against bio-piracy](#) – Times of India

It has been prove beyond doubt, with literature and other records as evidence, that India has always been a treasure trove of medicinal knowledge. But with western systems of healing gaining ground and hogging the limelight for over two centuries, this traditional knowledge has been relegated to oblivion, or worse, claimed by others via patents. And this bio-piracy is precisely what the CSIR Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is fighting against on an international level.