

## **Drug cos bet on NDDS for better price, market share**

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With the drug pricing control getting more stringent, pharma companies are increasingly focussing on developing novel drug delivery systems (NDDS) to get an edge both in terms of pricing as well as promote their products as more efficacious so as to garner better market share.

Take for example, Gujarat-based mid-sized drug maker Troikaa Pharma, which has developed an NDDS for its Diclofenac painkillers, which it sells under the brand Dynapar QPS. The company claims that this is the first transdermal preparation of diclofenac which can enhance the action of pain-relief through topical application as enhances the penetration of diclofenac through skin.

The company's managing director Ketan Patel says, "We have spent nearly Rs 9 to 10 crore over the last four to five years to develop the Dynapar QPS, and the unique thing about this product being it penetrates skin barriers when topically applied. Hence, it also reduces the need to take oral painkillers." Upbeat on this new product, the company has already applied for registration in over 50 countries and is expecting a turnover of Rs 100 crore from Dyanapar QPS in around five year's time. Already, the product has clocked a turnover of Rs 10 crore in the first year, and Troikaa expects revenues from Dynapar QPS to double this fiscal.

A Mumbai-based analyst said that several companies try to improvise on existing versions of drugs to come up with different delivery mechanisms like extended release, modified release etc. "They especially try to brand them as more efficient products as well as also command a price premium for the same. Moreover, with the Centre considering to include these products under the 'new drug' category, they might also be hoping to bring these products outside of price control," he said on grounds of anonymity.

One of the first Indian companies to come up with an NDDS based on a conventional product was Ranbaxy. The company had come up with an extended-release technology for an existing formulation Ciprofloxacin. As Patel pointed out that earlier the patient needed to take the drug twice a day, but Ranbaxy came up with a technology which ensured that there was a delayed release and the optimal levels of the drug were maintained in the blood, thereby enabling the patient to take the drug only once a day.

Other companies like Torrent Pharma have also dabbled in the area. Torrent uses proprietary technologies like dual retard inlay technology, compact tablet technology, gastrive retentive system etc. Some of its novel solutions include Lamotrigine dispersible-OD formulation and Nicorandil OD formulation to name a few.

As the trend slowly picks up, even some of the smaller companies are looking at the area, claims S V Veerramani, president, Indian Drug Manufacturers Association. "While smaller companies do not have enough working capital to invest into research and development for novel drugs, many are now looking at NDDS actively," he said.

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