

# GSK sets sights on local drug brand

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GLAXOSMITHKLINE Pharmaceuticals (GSK Pharma), the Indian arm of UK drug biggie GSK Plc, is keen to acquire an Indian drug brand to have a wider presence in the chronic and lifestyle disease segments. The company is also close to inking two in-licensing deals with global innovator companies to roll out their products in India.

This is part of GSK Pharma's recent strategy to focus on high-value therapeutic areas such as dermatology, biotech, antibiotics, cardiovascular and oncology. "A dual strategy of brand acquisition and in-licensing will help reinforce our position in the chronic disease segment in India," GSK Pharma's managing director Hasit Joshipura told ET.

At present, GSK Pharma is close to finalising in-licensing deals for two innovator molecules in the cardiovascular and critical care segments. "We will sign the deal in about three weeks. We will manufacture one of these products in India while the other will be imported," said Mr Joshipura. An in-licensing deal will ensure GSK enjoys exclusive marketing rights of the particular drug in the Indian market.

Though Mr Joshipura did not disclose details, he said in-licensing deals would be signed with smaller innovator companies

who may not be present in India or do not have the distribution muscle. "Such companies do not have the scale in India but have interesting products," he added.

Apart from in-licensing, GSK Pharma is equally gung-ho about acquiring Indian medicine brands. It is scouting for brands which fit into its current portfolio in the chronic segment. "We have identified some targets and will soon initiate talks with the owners. If we get the right price, we may go for multiple acquisitions," Mr Joshipura said.

The company is going to roll out some blockbuster drugs from its global portfolio in India. It will launch three vaccines and a new drug in India next year. "These include a rotavirus vaccine, a combination vaccine and a breast cancer drug. We will also roll out a cervical cancer vaccine in 2009 and another vaccine in 2010," said Mr Joshipura.

India is also taking a centre-stage in GSK's global research activities. While it is evaluating the option to tie-up with Indian pharma companies engaged in innovative research, India already accounts for 10-12% of the company's global clinical research base. "We may set up a basic research facility in India at a later stage, though it is yet to be finalised," Mr Joshipura said.

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