

Bharat Biotech, UK's Acambis tie up for encephalitis vaccine

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HYDERABAD: Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and vaccine manufacturers Acambis of UK have entered into a manufacturing and marketing pact for the world's first single dose vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis (brain fever). The disease threatens 70 million children born in endemic country every year, particularly in the Asian region.

Bharat Biotech will hold marketing rights in the Indian sub-continent for ChimeriVax-JE, the vaccine to be passed on for contract manufacturing by Acambis.

Bharat expects to have approximate revenue of Rs 15 crore annually from the sale of ChimeriVax, Dr V Krishna Mohan, president, Bharat Biotech, said.

Acambis is preparing to commence pivotal phase III trials of the single-dose vaccine by the end of 2005.

"Clinical trials on about 1,000 subjects in India will be completed in three months time and we expect to launch the commercial product by June 2006," he said.

Currently, the JE vaccine available in India is administered in three doses costing Rs 150. Despite the availability of the vaccine for the past 60 years, the disease has been resulting in approximately 15,000 deaths every year, he added.

ChimeriVax is a second-generation vaccine and the price will be competitive with the available vaccine in the market, he said.

Stating that manufacturing capacity is not a constraint, Dr Mohan said Bharat can make a million doses a month if necessary but the company was looking at a requirement of one million every year.

Bharat Biotech boasts of the largest manufacturing plant in Asia-Pacific, with 40% of its revenues accruing from contract manufacturing. It currently has five products in the market, the latest being a vaccine for typhoid, Suchitra Ella, founder director, Bharat Biotech added.