

IT biggies bite into drug safety
Roli Srivastava | The Times of India

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Hyderabad: Making news for the wrong reasons each time, what is going unnoticed is the bullish turn that the clinical research industry is taking in the country. Over the last two years, IT majors including TCS, Cognizant, Wipro, Accenture, Genpact, HCL, among a host of others have dedicated a business vertical entirely for clinical data management and pharmacovigilance (study of side effects of drugs available in the market or being used for clinical trials), catering to pharma majors the world over. Add to that the central government's announcement that by 2011-end there would be as many as 100 pharmacovigilance centres set up across the country,

What It Means

▶ Each drug in the Indian market would be better monitored, doctors encouraged to report adverse drug reactions and India would eventually ban drugs much like FDA in the US

▶ **Major Players:** TCS, Cognizant, Wipro, Accenture, Genpact, HCL,



which would be in addition to similar centres that each pharmaceutical company in the country would be required to have.

"So far, there are 22 pharmacovigilance centres, but in the next two months, 50 will be added and by end of year 100," says S K Gupta, member of the central government's pharmacovigilance committee.

So what does it mean? It means that each drug in the

Indian market would be better monitored, doctors encouraged to report adverse drug reactions and India would eventually ban drugs much like FDA does in the US. "It also means that pharmacovigilance is expanding in India in a big way which was not so earlier," says Gupta.

Dr Gupta is actually stating the obvious. Here's why:

▶ Last September, Accenture reportedly tied up with

Institute of Clinical Research in India (ICRI) to jointly develop a pharmacovigilance and clinical research programme for the Indian market. "They (Accenture) come and teach on the programme to train people for their requirement in pharmacovigilance," says S R Dugal, chairman, ICRI. Accenture had earlier signed a \$ 550 million deal with pharma major Bristol-Myers Squibb.

▶ Last week, Wipro Technologies launched Wipro Clinical Collaboration Portal to reportedly help drug development owners, clinical research organisations and regulators to improve collaboration for multi-region clinical trials.

▶ **Feverish growth, P 4**

Pharmacovigilance sector growing at feverish pace

▶ Continued from Pg 1

- iGate Clinical Research International, formerly a subsidiary of iGate Corporation, is now considered a premier clinical trial management company.
- TCS describes itself as a leading clinical research and drug development service provider in India. It serves a range of global pharma firms and has on board healthcare professionals, doctors and PhDs in life sciences and pharmacology. It had a walk in for positions in clinical research earlier this year and so did Cognizant.
- Genpact boasts of a 500 plus personnel shouldering its clinical data intelligence service. Cognizant's website page gives the clinical re-



search services it offers ranging from epidemiology study to forecasting expected volumes of patients for clinical trials.

Industry experts say that pharmacovigilance, clinical data management and medical writing as a

sector is growing at a feverish pace with some pegging the growth rate at a whopping 100%. Reflecting the growth are the placements of students doing courses in clinical research. Dugal claims that 50-60% of placements at ICRI are at IT companies. "IT companies need clinical research knowledge and come to us for that," he says.

The IT firms not only collate data on trials, but their skilled staff also analyse the material. "The (clinical research) industry lends itself nicely to offshoring, primarily because it is process driven," says Sanjay Parekh, director, Indegene Lifesciences, which offers marketing solutions to 15 of the top 20 pharma companies in the world.

He explains that the reason why it has caught the attention of the IT/BPO sector is because clinical research revolves around working with large databases. And it makes business sense as well. While trials are cost-intensive, at least 15% of clinical research budget is spent on data management, which is good enough money.

He points out since the business needs trainable staff, it is also scalable and pegs a manifold growth in the pharmacovigilance sector alone. "We have experience in delivering pharmacovigilance to global companies which means we have the expertise. We will be able to take these processes and mirror them in the Indian market," Parekh says.

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