

Post-patent, Wyeth pharma plans renewed India push

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INVIGORATED by the introduction of product patents regime in the country, \$15-billion global pharma giant Wyeth is shrugging off its decades-long slumber and preparing to step on the gas to increase its sales and market share in India.

"We are very pleased with the results so far in India. We are working to bring our latest innovations to the market, and we are keen to take advantage of the economic situation," said Bernard Pousso, executive vice president of Wyeth, and president, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

Among others, Wyeth is looking to make India a major centre for clinical trials in South and South-east Asia. It is also trying to identify opportunities for outsourcing in both pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals. It is also planning to launch a number of its global blockbuster products in the market through its local subsidiary Wyeth Ltd.

Mr Pousso, who is perhaps among the first high-ranking global pharma executive to visit India after product patents were introduced, said Wyeth plans to launch two new products every year in the Indian market. They also want to file six product applications with the domestic regulatory authorities every three years.

"We want to be in the top tier of the pharmaceutical industry. We have good financial strength and

are looking to deliver good financial returns to our shareholders," Mr Pousso added. The company will shortly appoint a regional head for clinical trials.

Two bestselling products, the \$1.6-billion Enbrel to treat rheumatoid arthritis and Rapamune, a class of immunosuppressants, have already been launched in India. The third, the nearly \$1-billion Pevnar, a vaccine for pneumococcal disease, is likely to be launched shortly.

New Jersey-based Wyeth has a number of blockbuster brands in its portfolio. Mr Pousso said a number of these brands could find its way into the Indian market as demand in the over \$4.5 billion local drugs market heats up.

Wyeth Ltd was formed in India by the combination of Wyeth Labs, John Wyeth, Wyeth India Pvt and Geoffrey Manners. It has a consumer products division comprising Anacin and Anne French.

Despite being present in India for a long time, Wyeth Ltd has lagged behind not only its fellow multinationals but also Indian pharma companies in creating investor wealth and boosting sales.

At the end of March 2004, the turnover of Dr Reddy's Labs, the smallest of the Big Three Indian pharma companies, was more than five times that of Wyeth.

But Mr Pousso is unfazed. "We are not obsessed about size. We put a lot of emphasis on research & development and we are pretty bullish on future prospects. We expect faster growth," he added.

