

Manipal Group to set up Rs 45 cr clinical development centre

Our Bureau, Bangalore

MANIPAL Group will be setting up Manipal AcuNova, a clinical research organisation (CRO) at a cost of Rs 45 crore soon. The project is a collaborative venture of Manipal Education and Medical Group (MEMG) International India and AcuNova Life Sciences Pvt Ltd. The entity will be a set up as a full-fledged facility for clinical development which includes drug trials and customs research.

The investment to the extent of 60 per cent would be funded by the promoters and the rest of the funding will be through venture capital firms and strategic partners. The dedicated state-of-the-art facility to conduct clinical trials and customs research will take shape by mid-May 2005 on the 9th Floor for the 650-bedded Manipal Hospital in Bangalore.

What sets apart Manipal AcuNova from other CROs is the dual advantage of patient-physician force which is avail-

able at its extensive healthcare network at several locations in India besides Nepal and Sikkim where it has a 7,600-bed facility accessed by over 1.2 million patients treated by 1,300 doctors. Facilities are also expected to be opened in Dubai and Sri Lanka before the year-end. "It is this advantage, which will make us a full-fledged single-source hub to conduct multi-ethnic population clinical research services," Dr. Ramananda S. Nadig, COO, AcuNova Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, told Pharmabiz.

The clinical research services include pre-clinical studies, bio-availability, bio-equivalence, pharmacokinetics, pharmacogenomics, phase I to IV and clinical data management, apart from customs research in the areas of biology, biotechnology and stem cell, he said. "In the US operations - AcuNova-USA is set up to garner business from the region," Dr Nadig said.

The present team of 15 scientists will be scaled up to 70 by the end of May and will step up drug discovery. Doctors

will speed up drug approvals for clients world wide, Dr Nadig added.

The focus segments of the trials will include oncology, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, endocrinology with focus on diabetes, nephrology, psychiatry, cardiology and neurology. Together with the expertise of medical education specialists and the physicians, the company can conduct trials for any therapeutic segment, stated Dr Nadig.

The biggest advantage for AcuNova is Manipal Group's existing clinical research experience where its team of Principal Investigators who are part of its medical college faculty, have completed 150 clinical trials for both national and international pharma companies and CROs. The company's business model is intended to leverage the expertise of both its intellectual pool and infrastructure and offer its services as Site Management Centre which would help it spur growth as a CRO, he informed. ♦