

Patent Row No Hurdle for Gilead's Sovaldi Launch

Pharma co feels patent office's decision won't have broader implications on overall patent of Sofosbuvir

Divya Rajagopal@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: US drug maker Gilead Pharma says that the recent decision by the patent office, which rejected patent for one of its molecules, does not impact its India plans.

Gilead on Monday also announced that it is expanding the voluntary licence agreement with eight Indian companies to include its experimental drug

that could cure all the six types of hepatitis C. Gilead also makes the new hepatitis C drug, Sofosbuvir (brand name Sovaldi). Last year Gilead signed a licensing agreement with Strides, Mylan, Cipla, Dr Reddys, Ranbaxy, Zydus Cadila for Sovaldi. The drug which is priced at \$84,000 in US for 12-week treatment will be sold at \$900 in India. Gilead is expected to launch the drug in coming months in India.

"We believe that Gilead and Indian companies can make a difference to the world through such partner-

ships," said Gregg Alton executive vice-president to E.T. Alton also said that the decision by the patent office is only for one of the ancillary molecules and the company does not see this decision as an indication of India's policy on intellectual property.

"This was a rejection to the claims to the metabolites not for the compound itself. It is an important patent, and we still have the patent pending on the compound and we are also challenging the decision on the metabolites," Alton added.

"We don't see this having broader implications on overall patent of Sofosbuvir or for that matter the other compounds. We are confident that the Indian legal system will provide us redress," he said. Last week when the patent office announced its decision, health groups cheered the move saying that it will enable all generic companies to manufacture and sell the drug. However, it was only after few days it became clear that the main patent of Sovaldi was not rejected. Gilead believes that despite the sharp difference of the drug price between US and India, the company will continue to make profits on the drug.

Patent