"Affordability remains a big concern for Indian ophthalmology market"

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Currently, India faces a growing eye-health concern with approximately 4.95 million blind persons and 70 million vision-impaired individuals, including 240,000 blind children. Thus, the early detection and treatment of leading causes of blindness, such as cataracts, diabetes retinopathy and retinopathy of pre-term babies are crucial in reducing the prevalence of blindness and vision impairment across the country. Addressing this major concern, Germany headquartered technology firm ZEISS is collaborating with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru to harness the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance eye-care research and practices. To know more about the company's plans towards strengthening eye care research in India, BioSpectrum connected with Dipu Bose - Head, Medical Technology, ZEISS India & Neighbouring Markets.

What are the major in-store plans at ZEISS for the Indian ophthalmology market in 2025?

ZEISS India continues to deepen its presence in the existing Indian sub-continent, leveraging advanced technologies like AI, robotics, and digital solutions to enhance clinical procedures and deliver superior patient outcomes. For many people, health is the most valuable asset. In recent decades, advances in medicine and technology as well as growing prosperity have increased life expectancy and improved the health of people around the world and is no different in India and ZEISS is committed to support clinical community to improve eye care across India and focusing on improving our reach and distribution into smaller towns of the country.

In the future, a more holistic approach will be taken to health, focusing not only on the individual, but also on factors in a larger context that have an impact on health – including on a global level. Through its innovative technologies, ZEISS helps to improve the quality of life of patients around the world and provides more and more people with access to high-quality healthcare. Additionally, ZEISS is investing in research and development, with a strong focus on AI-driven applications for diagnostics and surgical procedures to further enhance patient outcomes.

What are your views on integrating new technologies like AI and robotics in the ophthalmology segment in India and globally?

The integration of cutting-edge technologies like AI and robotics in ophthalmology is revolutionising eye care both in India and globally. These advancements enable early and accurate diagnosis, personalised treatment plans, and improved surgical precision, ultimately enhancing patient outcomes. AI-powered diagnostics are playing a crucial role in detecting conditions like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma at an early stage, while robotic-assisted surgeries are improving efficiency and reducing recovery times.

At ZEISS India, we are committed to driving innovation in ophthalmology by leveraging AI and robotics to support eye care professionals with advanced tools that enhance precision, efficiency, and accessibility. As the demand for eye care services continues to grow, especially in a country like India with a high burden of vision-related diseases, these technologies will be instrumental in making quality eye care more accessible and effective.

Please share more details about the recent partnerships in India. Are you also planning to launch new products in the Indian market this year?

At ZEISS, we continuously strive to innovate and expand our offerings to meet evolving market needs. We remain committed to introducing cutting-edge solutions and exploring strategic partnerships that enhance technology adoption and improve customer experiences across our focus areas.

Innovation and research are at the core of ZEISS's DNA, driving our commitment to shaping the future of technology. With a strong focus on R&D, we continuously push the boundaries of what's possible. ZEISS India's most recent collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) for research on AI for eye-care is a testimony to our R&D focused efforts. ZEISS has established a sophisticated state-of-the-art research facility dedicated for developing high fidelity Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions for the betterment of eye-care and to upskill students in AI technologies at IISc. The initiative, supported by the Spectrum Lab in the Department of Electrical Engineering at IISc, aims to harness the transformative potential of AI to enhance eye-care practices and improve patient outcomes.

This collaboration will propel improvements in eye care solutions from India for the world considering the rising prevalence of vision impairments worldwide. The facility will act as a centre for cutting-edge research, allowing IISc researchers to investigate how AI could transform early diagnosis in eye care by providing innovative solutions that streamline processes, increase accuracy, and improve patient outcomes.

In addition to the lab set-up, ZEISS India is also sponsoring 6 MTech students for the next three years through its CSR-sponsored '*MTech Fellowship Programme*' at IISc for students pursuing master's degree in Signal Processing, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science & Engineering/Computational and Data Science.

For ZEISS, innovation is not just about advancing technology - it is about creating meaningful impact, improving lives, and setting new standards for excellence.

What is ZEISS's current market share in India? How is the company planning to strengthen its presence?

ZEISS holds a dominant position in the Indian ophthalmology and microsurgery market. India is one of ZEISS Group's top medtech markets. To further strengthen its presence, ZEISS is expanding its digital footprint through ZEISS Digital Support, which enables seamless connectivity between medical devices. The company is also increasing R&D investments, expanding its distribution network, and setting up more service and stock points in smaller cities to cater to a larger audience.

How much revenue was generated within the Indian market in 2024, and what are the growth expectations this year?

In the last financial year (German financial year- October 2023 – September 2024), ZEISS in India recorded approximately Rs 2,100+ crore turnover. We are quite optimistic about our strong growth prospects in India.

What are the current challenges facing the Indian ophthalmology market, and how is ZEISS addressing them?

The Indian ophthalmology market faces several challenges, primarily the limited access to healthcare, as advanced eyecare facilities are concentrated mainly in metro cities, making it difficult for rural populations to receive timely treatment.

Another challenge is the lack of awareness among people regarding the importance of regular eye checkups, leading to late diagnosis of conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, which could be prevented if detected early.

Affordability remains another big concern, as high-end ophthalmic technologies and surgical solutions are inaccessible to everyone. ZEISS is tackling these challenges by expanding into smaller cities and strengthening its distribution network to make advanced eye care more accessible.

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