

India is on the verge of a major stem cell breakthrough

22 October 2012 | Influencers | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Started with an initial investment of Rs4.5 crore two years ago, Regenerative Medical Services (RMS Regrow Regrow) is a now Rs20 crore company focused on stem cell based therapies. It has established its presence in 22 locations across India with nine branches and 13 franchisees employing a strong team of 185 biotechnologists. Formerly known as Satyan Pharmaceuticals, the company has developed a state-of-the-art stem cell processing center (SCPC) at Lonavala, close to Mumbai. It primarily operates through two verticals, one for umbilical cord blood banking and the other for the use of stem cells for different conditions. In an interview with BioSpectrum, Dr Satyen Sanghavi, CSO, RMS Regrow, talks about the growth of their start-up and the current stem cell-based therapies they are working on.

How is RMS Regrow expanding its stem cell therapy business in India?

We are extremely proud of what we have achieved over the two years since our inception and even more excited about our outlook for an equally promising future. We have successfully transitioned from a small start-up to become a respected firm.

RMS Regrow has undertaken over 350 successful bone and cartilage implants, and over 4,000 cord blood samples have been stored. Our company is currently focusing its expertise in stem cell-based therapies such as autologous cartilage regeneration therapy, autologous bone regeneration therapy (ABI-Ossron), umbilical cord blood banking (babycell) and TheraForm skin reconstruction.

Can you throw light on your latest product TheraForm?

TheraForm is an absorbable and biocompatible implant that allows tissue regeneration made of biocollagen. It not only controls bleeding but has several other advantages such as accelerated wound healing, and acts as matrix for tissue ingrowths, leaving the wound free of fiber, along with stabilizing blood clots. TheraForm helps in soft tissue augmentation and advanced wound healing especially in skin burns, including second and third degree burns, and ulcer treatment and surgeries involving skin tissue reconstruction. It has, hitherto helped treat more than 10 patients for post surgical-skin regeneration of cleft palate. Moving ahead, we would like to focus more on widening the indications for the same product.

What is the growth strategy that RMS Regrow has chalked out for itself for a market like India?

RMS Regrow is following a strategy to expand via a geographic growth through our branches and franchisees and focus on an organic growth. We also conduct various CMEs and workshops to provide training to doctors and develop new value added services for our clients. Currently, RMS Regrow is focused on providing regenerative medical service to Indian population, as we believe that the Indian market is very huge. We have already achieved our target for 2011-12 which is around Rs20 crore. Through our broadened B2B activities and hospital network we expect to achieve a turnover of Rs45-50 crore in 2013.

What have been the investments and progress in your Lonavla facility so far?

RMS Regrow endeavors to ensure that all its facilities meet the highest quality standards and are properly accredited. Within two years of operation we have acquired ISO:13485, GMP, GLP and GCP certifications, which have enabled the company to advance its autologous cellular therapies particularly in cartilage and bone regeneration.

What do you think differentiates RMS Regrow from other stem cell based enterprises?

The treatment offered by RMS Regrow is much competitive as compared to other similar treatments like hip and knee Replacement. We believe in long term benefits to the patients and a scenario of higher quality of life with increased productivity and efficiency in the healthcare system. RMS Regrow has taken a conscious effort to deal with autologous therapies, where we have more 500 case studies of specific indications for more than three years. We have post marketing surveillance data where phase II and phase III clinical trials were done with a success rate of more than 98 percent.

What according to you should be some of the corrective steps to be taken by stakeholders to improve the present situation of regenerative medicine?

There is no doubt that we are on the edge of a major stem cell breakthrough. Doctors and hospitals should come forward to support stem cell therapies, companies and laboratories, which follow proper ethics and regulations in terms of patient safety and efficacy with proven technology that has been accepted in the developed countries.