

SiliconIndia

Pharma tech firms taking guard against counterfeiters

Mumbai: The pharmaceutical technology companies are getting ready to mount another offensive against counterfeiters, armed with new platforms and more stringent laws. The industry players aim to block the path of forgers and to reduce the ease with which they make fake drugs and infiltrate the market, reports Economic Times.

Bilcare Technologies, a Pune based division of Bilcare Research has designed a device to detect fake drugs and Ideal Cures has added more colours to tablets to make counterfeiting difficult. As the manufacturers lose a large part of their revenue to the counterfeiters, consumers contact additional complications and some lose their lives due to harmful ingredients used in fake drugs.

The company will also launch a hand held device that will help to detect fake drugs. The customizable device is based on non clonable technology and can be placed at chemist shops for consumers to scan a product to check whether it is fake.

"The product has gone through rigorous pilots and could be launched in a few months. The pilots have given a good response and pharma companies are enthused about the product," said Praful Naik, Executive Director, Bilcare Research.

The device is likely to cost \$100 (around Rs. 5,000), and will scan a product for a tamper-evident and non clonable tag. As the fingerprint of the tag is generated in a random manner it is difficult to copy, the company claims.

The tag can be planted in any kind of packaging and modularly integrated with communication platforms. This will be read through a proprietary scanning device that will transmit an encrypted image through a universal mobility platform to a secure signature server, enabling authentication as well as tracing of a product.

This will prevent the spread of fake drugs, as the analysts estimate it to have penetrated up to 30 percent of the domestic market. The turnover of the fake drugs is expected to reach \$75 billion by 2010 end, up by 90 percent from 2005 levels, as per estimates by World Health Organization (WHO).

Ideal Cures, a tablet coating firm has introduced multi-colour tablet-coating. "It is easy for counterfeiters to duplicate both packaging and colour of an original product. But, at present, all tablets are only single-colour. Multi-colour coating is more complex to copy," said Suresh Pareek, Managing Director, Ideal Cures. The company has filed several patent applications for this technology which can be easily integrated into a pharma company's manufacturing process.

However, the experiences show that the use of innovative technologies will not rid the country of fake drugs. "Counterfeiters are only six months behind us. While these technologies won't put them out of business, they certainly will slow them down. Combined with new legislation and whistleblower policy, it will be more difficult for counterfeit drugs to find their way into the market," said Ranjit Shahani, Chairman and Managing Director, Novartis and President of the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI).