

Lupin ramps up manufacturing of drugs in demand

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Drug major Lupin has stepped up production of key drugs that are in demand during the novel coronavirus outbreak, and is also evaluating its existing portfolio to see if any drug can be repurposed for the treatment of Covid-19.

The company was not supplying hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to the US market before the Covid-19 crisis. It has since started. Besides, it sees significant supply opportunity for anti-infective drug Azithromycin to the US and expects an expedited approval for its inhaler product in the pipeline, Albuterol.

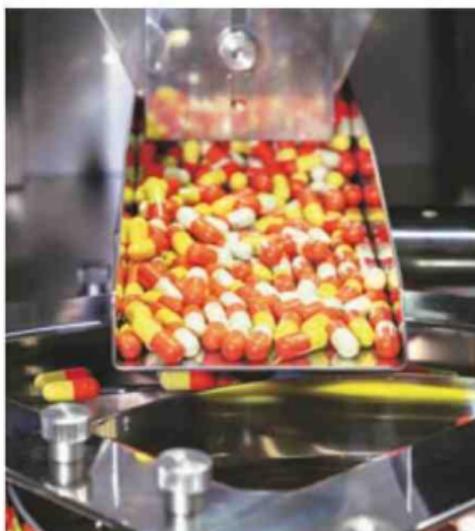
Speaking to *Business Standard*, Lupin Chief Executive Officer Vinita Gupta said, "We looked at our portfolio and the products that were immediately relevant were HCQ, Azithromycin, and Albuterol."

Albuterol helps to open up the airways in the lungs and is used to treat asthma as well as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

"With HCQ and Azithromycin, we made major efforts to build supply-chain capabilities as well as flexibilities, so that we could supply both to the Indian and the US markets through our manufacturing facilities," she said, adding, the company is working on technology transfer to its Somerset site in the US.

"We do not know how long this crisis will continue. It is prudent to be prepared," she added.

For Azithromycin, Lupin enjoys 40 per cent market share in the US in terms of volume. Demand for Azithromycin surged 3x from pre-Covid-19 levels, said Gupta. "The active pharmaceutical ingredient is made in Dabhasa (Gujarat) and we have the flexibility to make



FY20 GROWTH IN MAJOR MARKETS

Region	YoY growth rate (%)
North America	4.1
India	10.8
Europe, West Asia, Africa	3.8
Latin America	8.6
Asia Pacific	8.4

Source: Company

it even at Tarapur. The finished dosage form is made at Goa," she added.

As for HCQ, it can transfer the technology to manufacture to its US site, but would take a call depending on demand. As of now Lupin is prioritising Azithromycin and Albuterol.

It has made significant progress with its application for Albuterol with the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). "We made progress on the application with the agency (USFDA) and hope to get approval soon," said Gupta. There is demand for the product which has an estimated \$1 billion market size in the US.

These apart, Generic Tamiflu (Oseltamivir), which is used to treat influenza A and B, too, is witnessing good off-take in the US market and Lupin is focusing on that as well. The demand for these drugs has gone up 20-40 per cent. For Azithromycin, the demand has nearly tripled.