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Lupin eyes Lyfe beyond the pill

The company's digital health initiative for cardiac patients is part of its strategy to diversify into healthcare services



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Pharma major Lupin is diversifying itself to go “beyond the pill” to touch patient lives. Having forayed into the diagnostics business in December 2021, the Mumbai-headquartered ₹12,000-crore drug major, best known for its suite of drugs to treat tuberculosis, has now launched a digital health initiative for cardiac patients, and has plans to get into neurological rehabilitation centres in the near future.

Do these initiatives make business sense?

Analysts said these businesses were unlikely to make any meaningful contribution to Lupin's top line. But these are strategic marketing ideas. “Today, we are debating ethical and unethical pharmaceutical marketing practices, and the clamour to implement the Universal Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) is growing. Companies would focus on innovative ways to reach out to patients and doctors and enhance their clinician connect,” said Vishal Manchanda, analyst with Systematix Institutional Equities.

The government had introduced the UCPMP regime in 2015 to prevent unethical practices by pharmaceutical companies. The Centre has been trying to devise a formula via which

HEART OF THE MATTER

- Lupin's digital health arm for cardiac patients, Lyfe, launched in Jan 2023
- Offers help to patients with acute coronary syndrome
- Aims to touch 1 mn users in five years in the cardiac space
- Platform can be expanded to include hypertension, heart failure patients
- Lupin forayed into diagnostics in December 2021
- Aims to enter neurological rehabilitation for patients who have suffered strokes, for example

drug firms would not resort to “unfair” practices to generate prescriptions, and have strict guidelines around dos and don'ts of marketing.

In its 2021-22 annual report, Lupin noted that during the year the group started with its diagnostic business, which was “not material to the group”. It added that “this launch aligns with our commitment to Building Better Health, and places Lupin on the path towards becoming a holistic healthcare player”.

Last week, Lupin Digital, a wholly

owned subsidiary of Lupin, launched its digital therapeutics solution Lyfe for cardiac patients in India that aims to provide a support ecosystem. The company aims to have one million users onboard Lyfe within the next five years as it expands its offerings to include hypertensive patients and so on.

It is starting with acute coronary syndrome patients who have either recovered from a cardiac event, undergone an angioplasty, or are at high risk of a cardiac event. Designed by Indian cardiologists, Lyfe helps patients improve heart health through doctor-connected online and offline modules. Wearable devices approved by the US and European drug regulators record vital parameters and notify caregivers and doctors about off-range vitals and emergencies.

This is a subscription-based programme starting at ₹500 a month and going up to ₹20,000 a year, depending on the kind of device the patient needs. It offers expert intervention in the form of dedicated care managers, health coaches and nutritionists. In an emergency situation, patients can do an ECG at home and upload the data on the Lyfe platform; the Lupin Digital backend team can access and analyse the data, connect with a doctor or even call an ambulance.

Rajeev Sibal, president — India Region Formulations, Lupin, told *Business Standard* that this was a way to offer better patient outcomes, and also to enhance its doctor connect. Sibal did not disclose when Lupin Digital could break even, but admitted that there would be some rub-off effect in terms of prescriptions generated for its cardiac medicines.

As such cardiology is a major therapeutic area for Lupin in India, where it had a 6.9 per cent market share (as of March 2022). Lupin noted in its FY22 annual report that with a growth rate of 12.5 per cent its cardiac drug sales had outpaced the Indian pharmaceutical market's growth of 10.5 per cent in FY22, and it increased its market share from 6.77 per cent in FY21 to 6.9 per cent in FY22. Cardiac therapy accounts for 24 per cent of Lupin's India revenue.

Focusing on cardiac patients through Lyfe was a natural extension of focusing on this business, said analysts. “This is more like business as usual. I don't see a lot of revenues coming from this segment immediately; but it will help to create a brand perception among cardiologists, it would grant them access to several top cardiologists in the country,” said another Mumbai-based analyst. He added that doctors, too, didn't want “gifts” as was the general perception; occasionally they also wanted ways to enhance their practice.

“Through Lyfe a doctor sitting in Mumbai can monitor a patient in Latur (in eastern Maharashtra). This not only gains him a patient, but is also a specialised offering that he brings to his patient,” the analyst said. He added that several drug firms offered high-end training to doctors to upgrade their skills, some firms offered hand-holding to diabetes patients who start their journey on insulin. “Going beyond the pill helps firms to ensure more ‘stickiness’ with patients,” the analyst said.

Starting with 10 cities, Lupin plans to take this to 30 cities by 2023-end, covering most of the cardiologists in these markets. The platform already has 250 cardiologists on board. The top 30 cities of the country house 80 per cent of its cardiologists, so patients in the hinterland can also stay connected with a city doctor through this system, Sibal said.

After launching its diagnostics arm, Lupin had said it would be synergistic to its existing India business by providing doctors “broader solutions” for the patients they serve. With Lyfe, it further broadens the ambit and, as Sibal put it, they are now thinking of getting into neurological rehabilitation for brain stroke patients. The horizon keeps widening.

Online Link : [Business initiative that has a heart: Lupin eyes Lyfe beyond the pill](#)