

## Gilead allows 7 companies to make Hepatitis C medicine

Indian firms will be free to fix prices, make, sell sofosbuvir

### OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, September 15

Gilead Sciences has announced non-exclusive licensing agreements with seven generic medicine makers in India for its hepatitis C medicines.

These seven drug-makers — Ranbaxy Laboratories, Cipla, Mylan Laboratories, Cadila Healthcare, Sequent Scientific, Hetero Drugs and Strides Acrolabs — have been granted "licence to produce generic sofosbuvir and investigational single tablet regime of ledipasvir/sofosbuvir for treatment of chronic hepatitis C," the company said.



Gregg Alton

Gregg Alton, Executive Vice-President (Corporate and Medical Affairs), Gilead, said these companies would be free to manufacture and distribute these medicines to about 91 developing countries. They will also be free to price the products competi-

tively and would be required to pay a royalty of 7 per cent (on the price determined by the company).

Alton added Gilead would also launch the medicines in India, including Solvaldi (trade name for Sofosbuvir). Solvaldi would be priced at about \$300 a bottle (of 28 pills), six of which would be required to complete one course of hepatitis C. As a result, one course of treatment for hepatitis C would cost upwards of ₹1 lakh in India, where majority of people are affected by genotype 3 of the virus, which requires a 24-week-long (about six months) treatment.

In the US, where genotype 1 is prevalent and requires medicines for 12 weeks, the treatment costs a massive \$84,000 (over ₹5 lakh).

Alton said the company is

adopting tier pricing in different countries depending on the economic status of the country. India falls in the 'low-income' category.

Generic equivalents of the medicine are likely to bring down the cost further.

### Civil society not happy

However, the civil society is not entirely happy with this move.

Geetanjali Sharma, Legal Officer, Lawyers Collective, said that the most disturbing aspect of this agreement is that it leaves several countries with high incidents of hepatitis C out, including Ukraine, Brazil, China, Thailand and Yemen.

"Besides, the company has not received a patent yet and a licensing agreement ahead of that is just a tactic to create pressure on patent offices," she added.

Patent