

PSORIASIS DRUG

Sun Pharma, Merck sign licensing pact

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MUMBAI

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd said on Wednesday that it had signed an agreement with US drug maker **Merck and Co. Inc.** to license the latter's new investigational drug **tildrakizumab**, being tested for the treatment of chronic plaque psoriasis, a skin disease.

With this, Sun Pharma will get exclusive worldwide sales rights for the drug candidate, which is currently in Phase-3 trials.

Sun Pharma will pay Merck \$80 million upfront for the rights. Under the licensing agreement, Merck will continue all clinical development and regulatory activities, which will be funded by Sun Pharma. Upon product approval, Sun Pharma will be responsible for regulatory activities, including subsequent submissions and post-approval studies, manufacturing and commercialization of the approved product.

Merck is eligible to receive undisclosed payments associated with regulatory (including product approval) and sales milestones, as well as tiered roy-

alties ranging from mid-single digit through teen percentage rates on sales.

Sun Pharma and Merck had in 2012 formed a generic drug development and supply joint venture in India to support Merck's generic business in developing countries in Asia. The new licensing agreement is unrelated to the existing joint venture.

"Consistent with our previously announced global initiative to sharpen our commercial and research, including prioritizing our late stage pipeline candidates, we are pleased to enter into this agreement with Sun Pharma to help realize the potential of tildrakizumab for patients with chronic plaque psoriasis," said Iain D. Dukes, senior vice-president, business development and licensing, Merck Research Laboratories, the research arm of Merck.

According to Kirti Ganorkar, senior vice-president, business development, Sun Pharma, the new collaboration deal is a part of its strategy towards building the company's pipeline of innovative dermatology products in a market with strong growth potential.

International cooperation