

5 firms get sub-licence to make new AIDS drug

Special Correspondent

MUMBAI: The Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) has announced six new sub-licences with Aurobindo, Cipla, Emcure, Hetero Labs, Laurus Labs and Desano to allow generic manufacture of anti-AIDS drug tenofovir alafenamide (TAF). This follows MPP's signing a licence with U.S. pharmaceutical major Gilead Sciences Inc. for the company's TAF, which is a novel investigational medicine.

A statement from MPP said the announcement comes a day after Gilead released positive results on two of its TAF Phase III studies which suggest that the medicine has the potential to play a large role in the international community's efforts to scale up HIV

treatment. The sub-licence is for the generic manufacturers to make the generic versions of TAF for 112 developing countries.

Development plans

"The generic companies will begin development plans for a promising, HIV product simultaneous with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's review to expedite access to low and middle-income countries once the medicine is approved," Greg Perry, Executive Director, MPP, said in a statement. "This is revolutionary in its approach to ensuring more people living with HIV have access to newer options for treating the disease."

In studies, TAF had demonstrated comparable anti-

ral efficacy to that of 300 milligram tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF) — a World Health Organization-preferred HIV therapy — but at a dose that is one-tenth. "The smaller milligram dose may also allow lower production costs, as well as greater ease in developing new fixed-dose combinations and single table regimens," the statement said.

Geneva-based MPP was created to increase access to quality, appropriate, affordable medicines for people living with HIV in developing countries. It facilitates the production of low-cost versions of existing medicines as well as the development of new formulations. The MPP was formed through innovative financing mechanism UNITAID.

Patent.