

'Protein-based therapeutics are the future of pharma'

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Protein-based therapeutics are tipped to be the most important segment in the pharma market in the near future, says Girish Sahni, Director of Chandigarh-based Institute of Microbial Technology.

These products are at present occupying an increasingly important position worldwide in medicine, he said, while delivering the Yellapragada Subba Row Memorial Lecture, titled 'Four generations of clot busters: Evolution from affordable bio-generics to innovative bio-leaders', at the University of Hyderabad.

Therapeutic proteins are proteins engineered in the lab for pharmaceutical use. For example, insulin was one of the first protein therapeutic introduced to treat diabetes.

These therapies are now used in treatment of cancer, anaemia, hepatitis, infectious diseases, and so on.

In India, the focus has

been on developing biotechnologies by evolving improved process know-how and economies of scale, he said.

However, there is an opportunity to design newer, patentable biologics that can reposition the Indian bio-pharma experience to one of strategic advantage through process improvement on one hand and innovation in molecular design/redesign on the other, Sahni added.

He talked about the 15 years of applications-oriented work he carried out along with colleagues at the Chandigarh lab on the development of protein-based drugs, especially in the area of life-saving clot dissolvers.

Efforts to develop clot buster drugs began in the country in the mid-1990s.

Till then, such drugs were imported, and sold at comparatively high cost, varying between ₹5,000 for streptokinase and nearly ₹50,000 for tissue plasminogen activator for a single dose.

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