

Sanofi-aventis launches PRAYAS, an endeavor to meet rural India's healthcare needs

The Company's two-pronged strategy aims to bridge diagnosis-treatment gap by facilitating training sessions for rural doctors and provide quality medicines at affordable prices

Kolkata, February 5, 2009: Sanofi-aventis India today announced its two-pronged strategy to improve the quality of healthcare practices in rural India. The Company has launched *Prayas*, (meaning 'endeavor'), aimed at bridging the diagnosis-treatment gap through a structured continuing education program for rural doctors across India. Through *Prayas*, specialists from semi-urban areas will share latest medical knowledge and clinical experience with general practitioners based in smaller towns and villages in the interiors of India. Sanofi-aventis' second strategy for improving healthcare access is to make quality medicines available at affordable prices for rural India patients. Together, these strategies will be known as sanofi-aventis' 'Hoechst' initiative for rural India.

The pilot program has successfully tested the unique *Prayas* 'mentor-mentee' model amongst more than 3200 medical practitioners across West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Pratin Vete, Senior Director - Hoechst Business Unit, Aventis Pharma Limited (Group sanofi-aventis) said, "Sanofi-aventis has launched *Prayas*, in order to complement the Government's efforts to extend healthcare access to the furthest corners of rural India. *Prayas* is our commitment to 'inclusive healthcare management' in India. "

He further added, "Usually rural patients simply receive symptomatic treatment that results in sub-optimal disease management. This often leads to antibiotics resistance, recurrence of disease, faulty treatment and eventually an increased economic burden on the individual and society. Therefore, diagnosis and treatment for these patients is a major concern. Through *Prayas*, sanofi-aventis is making strong efforts to ensure that patients in rural India are treated holistically and also locally for common ailments."

So, if a child comes to a doctor with fever, it is important for the doctor to also check for other symptoms such as malnutrition and only then diagnose and treat the underlying disease.

Speaking about how the *Prayas* model was developed, Mr. Pratin Vete, Senior Director - Hoechst Business Unit said: "*Prayas* is an evolving model that was piloted in May 2009. The fantastic response and commitment demonstrated by the rural medical fraternity, has encouraged us to accelerate our launch plans across the country. In West Bengal alone, we have conducted 84 workshops and have trained 467 doctors across 30 clusters of towns/villages during the pilot stage. "

"To complement this knowledge-based program (*Prayas*), sanofi-aventis is also launching a new range of quality medicines at affordable prices in these geographical areas under the old and familiar umbrella brand name - Hoechst, which is today a sanofi-aventis initiative. This product range will help address the challenge of accessibility, affordability and availability of quality medicines to patients in remote villages," said Mr. Vete.

The Company had begun by introducing ten drugs for infections, pain and gastric disturbances.

Sanofi-aventis India will facilitate *Prayas* workshops for General Practitioners on disease areas that are a major concern in rural India. Data from WHO, UNICEF* and sanofi-aventis' own survey shows that respiratory, gastrointestinal and nutritional diseases are affecting millions in rural India. Hence, the initial workshops will focus on these disease areas.

Says Dr. Pawan Agrawal, Consultant Pulmonologist & Intensivist, Calcutta Medical Research Institute (CMRI) and one of the partner doctors for Prayas workshops, "It is extremely fulfilling to partner with sanofi-aventis and develop therapeutic-area based learning modules for Prayas. My fellow doctors in larger cities can now share latest medical information and their clinical experience with our colleagues practicing in the rural areas of India and ultimately benefit the patients."

Sanofi-aventis India has already conducted 554 workshops and three modules on respiratory diseases during the pilot phase for over 3,200 doctors across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A key learning from these workshops has been that doctors are willing to invest time to keep themselves updated and are today, far more confident of systematically diagnosing diseases. They are hence prompted to come back and participate in subsequent Prayas modules.

Encouraged by this early success, sanofi-aventis will extend *Prayas* in these States and also in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In the coming five years, sanofi-aventis aims to extend the benefits of *Prayas* to as many as 100,000 doctors in rural areas and thus contribute to India's much needed healthcare capacity building initiative.

About sanofi-aventis group: Sanofi-aventis, a leading global pharmaceutical company, discovers, develops and distributes therapeutic solutions to improve the lives of everyone. Sanofi-aventis is listed in Paris (EURONEXT: SAN) and in New York (NYSE: SNY).

Sanofi-aventis in India operates through three entities - Aventis Pharma Limited, Sanofi-Synthelabo (India) Limited and Sanofi Pasteur India Private Limited – the vaccines division of Group sanofi-aventis. Sanofi-aventis and its 100% subsidiary Hoechst GmbH are the major shareholders of Aventis Pharma Limited and together hold 50.12% of its paid-up share capital. Sanofi-Synthelabo (India) Limited and Sanofi Pasteur are 100% subsidiaries of Sanofi-aventis Group. The Global affiliate recently acquired a controlling stake in Shantha Biotechnics in India. Aventis Pharma Limited is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange. The Company focuses its activities on seven major therapeutic areas namely – Cardiovascular diseases, Thrombosis, Oncology, Central Nervous System disorders, Metabolic Disorders, Internal Medicine and Vaccines.

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* Mortality Country Fact Sheet 2006, WHO Report (2006) and http://www.unicef.org/india/nutrition_1556.htm