OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHARMA INDUSTRY’S RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS WITH CSIR-CDRI

Dear Reader,

Industry can look forward to work with CSIR-CDRI in this new era of dynamic leadership of CSIR, with Dr. (Mrs) N. Kalaiselvi, the new Director General of CSIR and Secretary, DSIR and Dr. (Mrs) Radha Rangarajan, Director, CDRI, Lucknow, who has recently taken charge of this pioneer pharmaceutical research laboratory in India which has a very distinguished track record in drug discovery research from early days, especially from the times of Dr. Nitya Anand, Director of CSIR-CDRI from 1974 to 1984.

CDRI (Central Drug Research Institute), Lucknow has been India’s frontrunner and torch-bearer for drug research, including early “Drug Discovery” research, even when there were no drug product patents in India. Dedicated to the Nation on 17th February 1951, the founding mission of the CSIR-CDRI was to revamp the fledgling Indian Pharmaceutical Industry of early days after Independence of India. In tune with the vision and mission, CSIR-CDRI evolved as an epicentre of new drug discovery in India. Out of the 22 new drugs discovered and developed in India, 13 have emerged from CSIR-CDRI, including the world’s first non-steroidal oral contraceptive, Centchroman, having INN, Ormeloxifene. The globally accepted antimalarial drug Alpha-beta Arteether also was a notable contribution from CSIR-CDRI. Ormeloxifene has been launched as “Saheel” in 1991 through HLL, has now been relaunched recently as “Chhaya”, by the National Health Mission; ASHA-NGOs. Dr. Nitya Anand, Director of CSIR-CDRI and his team were the pioneers for these new drug discoveries, some of which were commercialised successfully.

Over the years, CDRI has been providing phenomenal support as Industry’s research partner and consultant, paving the way for the transformation of the Indian Pharmaceutical sector. An array of brilliant scientists had adorned the Directorship of CDRI over the years, Dr. M.M. Dhar, Dr. Nitya Anand, Dr. B.N. Dhawan, Dr. V.P. Kamboj and Dr. C.M. Gupta, Dr. T.K. Chakraborty and Dr. Madhu Dikshit. The golden era of CSIR-CDRI can well be described as that of Dr. Nitya Anand, who was deeply involved in Drug Discovery Research in close co-ordination with Industry. Dr. Nitya Anand and his team had been granted many US and Indian patents, including those licensed to Industry for commercialization as described above.

A large number of technologies have been transferred by CDRI to pharma industry. Many new process technologies have been developed and patented by CDRI for transfer to industry. The CDRI website lists many success stories of industry-CDRI collaborations including during recent Covid pandemic for RT-PCR test advancements.

It is heartening to note that Dr. Madhu Dikshit, the ex-Director of CDRI 2015-2017 [and later Director of “Thsti” (Translational Health Science and Technology Institute)] had addressed Indian Drugs Annual Day in 2019. The present Director of CDRI, Dr. Radha Rangarajan is also deeply involved in translational research and product development in the public health arena for the last two decades.

Dr. Radha Rangarajan, with her early association with the Drug Discovery division of Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories in 2003 to 2009 and hands-on exposure to start-up initiatives (Vitas Pharma and HealthCubed) thereafter, will bring tremendous potential for industry academia collaboration at CDRI.

Dr Radha Rangarajan has been actively involved in translational research and product development in the public health arena for the last two decades. Working closely at the interface between academia, start-ups and industry, her experiences span the drug discovery, diagnostics and medical devices sectors.

Between 2003 and 2009, Dr Rangarajan worked in the Drug Discovery division of Dr Reddy’s Laboratories in Hyderabad. She served in multiple roles, successfully
developing early-stage molecules for various therapeutic areas such as anti-infectives, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Thereafter, she co-founded Vitas Pharma, a drug discovery and development company focused on novel therapies to treat highly resistant infections. She leveraged public-private partnerships to build a highly efficient innovation platform delivering multiple lead optimized candidates, granted patents and companion diagnostics. In 2020, she took on the role of Chief Technology Officer at HealthCubed, a medical devices company focused on affordable diagnostics, where she was responsible for product development, clinical validation, manufacturing and regulatory affairs.

Dr. Nair is the Chairman of the IPR Committee in IDMA.

Dr. Gopakumar G. Nair is a Ph.D in Organic Chemistry (1966) from National Chemical Laboratory, Pune (Pune University). He was a Post-Doctoral fellow at IIT Bombay, Powai (1967) before joining the Pharma Industry. He was Director of Bombay Drug House P. Ltd., later Chairman of BDH Industries Ltd. as well as CMD of Bombay Drugs & Pharma Ltd., which was merged with Strides Arcolab Ltd. in 2001. Dr. Nair served IDMA as office bearer for many years from 1972 onwards and was Chairman of various Committees for nearly 4 decades. He was the President of IDMA in 1999/2000. Currently, Dr. Nair is the Chairman of the IPR Committee in IDMA.

Having moved into the Intellectual Property field, he was the Dean of IIPS (Institute of Intellectual Property Studies) at Hyderabad in 2001/2002. Later, he set up his own boutique IP firm, Gopakumar Nair Associates, as well as Gnanlex Hermeneutics Pvt. Ltd., having done his LL.B. from Mumbai University. He has done his LL.M. from Jindal Global Law School in 2022. He is also CEO of Patent Gurukul and President of Bharat Education Society, Kurla, Mumbai, managing many educational institutions in and around Mumbai.

Let us hope that under her dynamic leadership CDRI will once again become the vibrant research collaborator and friend-philosopher and guide for Industry as in the golden days of Dr. Nitya Anand.

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About The Editor

Dr. Gopakumar G. Nair is a Ph.D in Organic Chemistry (1966) from National Chemical Laboratory, Pune (Pune University). He was a Post-Doctoral fellow at IIT Bombay, Powai (1967) before joining the Pharma Industry. He was Director of Bombay Drug House P. Ltd., later Chairman of BDH Industries Ltd. as well as CMD of Bombay Drugs & Pharma Ltd., which was merged with Strides Arcolab Ltd. in 2001. Dr. Nair served IDMA as office bearer for many years from 1972 onwards and was Chairman of various Committees for nearly 4 decades. He was the President of IDMA in 1999/2000. Currently, Dr. Nair is the Chairman of the IPR Committee in IDMA.

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