Roche launches Cancer blockbuster Tecentriq subcutaneous form in India

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New Delhi: Swiss Pharma major, Roche has commercially launched a subcutaneous (SC) version of its blockbuster cancer immune-therapy Tecentriq (atezolizumab) in India.

The subcutaneous form is approved for the treatment of adjuvant and metastatic non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). The therapy was initially approved and launched for use as an intravenous (IV) infusion in 2018.

Globally, the subcutaneous forms was approved for usage by the UK MHRA in 2023, followed by the US FDA in September 2024.

The subcutaneous version is bioequivalent to the 1200 mg IV formulation but is marketed at a higher strength of 1,875 mg as fundamentally it has lower and slower absorption compared to IVs.

Alongside improving patient experience and optimising healthcare resources, subcutaneous formulations also help companies to extend the commercial lifecycle of their brands and delay the potential entry of cheaper generic copies.

The drug will be retailed at nearly Rs 3.7 lakh per vial.

To improve therapy access for cash-paying customers, the company runs a patient support program, Blue Tree and also offer interest-free EMI options; however, eligibility criteria and upfront costs are disclosed.

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"The launch of Tecentriq SC reflects our continued commitment to improving access to advanced cancer care through solutions that are faster, more convenient, support patient-centric outcomes and importantly enable health systems to be more efficient and effective in providing cancer care", said Rajwinder Mehdwan, Roche Pharma India MD and CEO.

Tecentriq targets the PD-L1 protein, which is expressed on tumour cells and tumour-infiltrating immune cells. It also helps in re-activation of T cells, required to recognize and destroy tumor expressing cells.

Under multiple clinical studies, the checkpoint inhibitor has helped patients to live longer (extending overall survival) and disease fee survival as well.

More recently, in the the IMvigor011 trial concluded last year, among patients with muscle-invasive bladder cancer, it demonstrated to reduce the risk of death by 41 per cent and relapse (disease recurrence) by 36 per cent compared with placebo.

Tecentriqa patent exclusivity ruins trough 2030 and in 2025 the drug remained Roche's leading oncology asset with total sales of 3.6 billion Swiss Franc (around $4.5 billion).

In the US, the drug is experiencing increasing pressure from rival biologics, however, the positive performance in international markets helped to score a 3 per cent year-onyear gain.

Roche's Tecentriq competes with AstraZeneca's Imfinzi (durvalumab) and several other PD-1 inhibitors such as Merck's Keytruda (pembrolizumab) and Bristol Myers Squibb's Opdivo (nivolumab).

Drug makers across the world have been putting a heavy purse in PD-L1 targeted immunotherapies and Indian drugmakers are also joining the segment with in-licensing deals, biosimilars, and other strategic initiatives.

Targeting the dermatology segment, last year, India's largest drug maker, Sun Pharmaceuticals acquired US-based Checkpoint Therapeutics for up to $416 million to onboard its novel PD-LI inhibitor, Unloxcyt.

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