

**Headlines** Advinus plans trials for novel diabetes drug

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### **Description**

Four years after Ranbaxy's ex-research head, Rashmi Barbhैया, joined hands with the Tata group to set up India's first integrated drug discovery company, Advinus, this Bangalore-based firm is on the threshold of initiating clinical trials of a potential diabetic drug molecule.

"The company says this drug, once developed, will belong to a new class with no similarly acting medicine available anywhere in the world."

There are no drugs of a similar nature in the market. The nearest one to the type of drug we are trying to develop is in the clinical trial stage, Barbhैया, CEO of Advinus, informed Business Standard.

He says Advinus will apply for conducting clinical trials on the molecule before Indian drug regulators by June.

The company, which has a drug development wing in Bangalore and a drug discovery unit in Pune, considers the diabetes lead the first promising drug candidate passed on from its drug discovery unit to its development wing. Our Pune facility is working on seven to eight distinct drug discovery programmes. We have collaborative research agreements with Merck, Johnson and Johnson and Genzeme, among others. The research programmes are linked to milestone payments and we have already received three milestone payments from Merck, Barbhैया said, without disclosing the financial details.

The company says it is expecting to clinch at least two major drug discovery partnerships with global giants during the year.

The Bangalore facility, which provides drug development services to 70-80 pharma companies within and outside the country, is the company's major revenue earner. When we started our Pune facility, we had no hope to see it generate revenues during the initial years. But within two years, milestone payments are coming from Pune, too, Barbhैया said.

Ours is the only one-stop shop for drug discovery in the country. We want more Indian pharmaceutical companies to make maximum use of our expertise. We may have succeeded in bringing global pharma giants for the first time to India through our collaborative research programmes, but we will be happier to service the drug discovery needs of domestic firms, he added.