

**Headlines** Advinus Therapeutics and DNDi Join Forces on Drug Discovery and Development for Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala Azar)

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**Description**

The Advinus Therapeutics (P) Ltd, has begun a partnership with the Geneva-based Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) for discovery and development of therapies for visceral leishmaniasis, commonly known in India as Kala-azar.

Kala-azar is a fatal and infectious disease, which occurs in the developing world, including India and Africa. The collaboration is the first of its kind in India to find a therapy for the neglected disease.

Current treatments have significant drawbacks, either in terms of route of administration, length of treatment (21-28 days) or emerging parasitic resistance.

The collaboration, which will be for five years for now, brings together expertise in chemistry, biology, screening, and pre-formulation, and will help to strengthen capacity in Kala-azar endemic countries through training and networking.

The goal of the project is to find molecules proven to be safe and active against leishmania parasites in early stage and to screen research through the first steps of regulatory safety assessment in the pre-clinical phase, Advinus Therapeutics said in a release here Thursday.

'India today is one of the few countries in the world that not only has the disease burden, but also the capability and capacity to research and develop new therapies for these diseases,' Rashmii Barbhैया, CEO and MD of Advinus, said.

Bernard Pecoul of DNDi said the project should serve as a model for future drug development for neglected diseases.

The Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative is a not-for-profit drug development initiative established in 2003 by five publicly funded research organisations - Malaysia's Ministry of Health, Kenya Medical Research Institute, Indian Council of Medical Research, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation Brazil, and the Institut Pasteur.

It is also supported by Medecins Sans Frontieres and WHO's special programme for research and training in tropical diseases and is working on 18 healthcare research projects worldwide.