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Biosimilars in emerging countries: Argentina

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The biopharmaceutical industry started in Argentina in the early eighties with the foundation of BioSidus, an R&D firm that in 1990 produced and commercialized an erythropoietin biosimilar, becoming the first in South America. Since then, the main focus of the local biopharmaceutical industry has been the production of biosimilars, including Etanercept, Filgrastim, FSH, Interferon, Interleukin-2, Molgramostim, and Somatropin, among others. Those products are priced between 30 and 70 per cent cheaper than the innovator's product price, and the production costs reach one tenth of the originals. They are commercialized in Argentina, but between 75 and 85% is for exports to more than 30 countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. In the absence of venture capital, and due to the high cost to the national healthcare system, the Government plays a major role in supporting projects for the generation of biopharmaceutical start-ups and partnerships between Universities, National Institutes and Pharmaceutical Firms, providing funding, incentives and tax benefits for R&D projects. One of these programs resulted this year in the opening of a plant for the production of a rituximab biosimilar and other monoclonal antibodies, the first in Latin America. Today, there are nearly 30 biopharmaceutical firms, with representations from the top ten pharma leaders in the world. Argentina is the third market in biologics of Latin America, with US\$ 600 million sales in 2011 and is among the fastest growing across the globe, with an average annual growth rate of 23.5% in US-dollars since 2007.

Biography

Gustavo Helguera has completed his Ph.D. at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina and postdoctoral studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is Adjunct Professor at the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is also Adjunct Researcher at the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET), Argentina. He is working in the development of monoclonal antibodies for the therapy of cancer and infectious diseases. Has published more than 30 papers in reputed journals and book chapters, and has presented at more than 50 international/national Conferences

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