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CSIR gearing up for trial of drug molecule for TB

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More molecules found under OSDD to go to clinical trials

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is moving ahead with its plans to conduct clinical trials of a drug molecule for treatment of tuberculosis. The trial is likely to take place this year, CSIR Director General Samir Brahmachari said here on Thursday.

Talking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a programme at the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), a CSIR laboratory at Pappanamcode here, he said many more molecules synthesized under the Open Source Drug Discovery (OSDD) programme were expected to make it to different stages of clinical trials over the next five years.

OSDD is a CSIR programme that links researchers across the globe to solve key challenges in designing drugs for tropical diseases like malaria and tuberculosis which fail to draw the attention of pharmaceutical corporations involved in research.

The project is based on a portal that provides an open source platform for scientists, doctors, technocrats, software professionals, and students to share knowledge. The collaborative approach is designed to keep the cost of drug discovery low, thereby making treatment affordable.

"OSDD is expected to establish a paradigm in drug discovery, though the process takes time," said Prof. Brahmachari. Earlier, he felicitated 10 M.Sc. students in Chemistry who were involved in the effort to synthesize the molecules.

Drawn from seven colleges in the State, the students were part of a wider group from universities, IITs, IISERs, and other academic institutions across the country selected for an outreach project under OSDD.

The students were mentored by CSIR scientists and given access to some of the latest techniques in drug research and sophisticated analytical instruments to carry out synthetic reactions. They came up with 60 molecules with the potential to be developed as anti-TB drugs. The results were submitted online to the OSDD portal.

The CSIR collaborated with the Academy of Chemistry Teachers, Kerala, for the outreach programme designed to promote interest in drug research among students and improve the quality of higher education.

Director, NIIST, Suresh Das; Project Director, OSDD, Zakir Thomas; and coordinator of the student outreach programme K.V. Radhakrishnan were present.

V.R.Vishnu, a student of NSS College, Pandalam, said he felt proud to be part of the project to develop affordable drugs for neglected diseases. "It provided me a golden opportunity to understand the application potential of science."

Ancy Yohannan, a student of University College, Thiruvananthapuram, said she found the project challenging. "It was exciting to become part of a great movement to develop modern drugs. For a postgraduate student like me, it was a great opportunity to understand the importance of research-oriented laboratory work."

Open source platform for drug discovery

Collaboration helps reduce cost of discovery

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