

Zydus Cadila, the first to launch revolutionary anti-obesity drug Slimona in India

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Zydus Cadila has launched Slimona, the new generation anti-obesity drug in India. Slimona (Rimonabant) is a selective CB1 Endocannabinoid (EC) receptor antagonist indicated for the treatment of obesity. The group is the first company to launch this revolutionary new molecule for Indian patients. This first-in-class drug has been approved for the treatment of obese patients with associated risk factors, such as type II diabetes or dyslipidemia. The drug comes in a tablet form of strength 20 mg to be consumed before breakfast once a day (administered strictly under medical advice).

Obesity differs from being overweight, as it is a disease wherein excess of body fat is accumulated. It is determined through a measurement tool – Body Mass Index (BMI) and a person with BMI of 30 or more is said to be obese. Significant increase in the consumption of fats and energy dense foods with a concurrent reduction in physical activity has led to an alarming increase in obesity in India. The risk of obesity in India is highest in 20% of the population that consumes 80% of visible dietary fat. According to the Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI), a food-policy NGO, there are an estimated 45% overweight women and 29% overweight men in urban India. School surveys in Indian cities show that 30% of adolescents from India's higher economic groups are overweight. Data from the World Health Organisation shows that 300 million people in the world are obese, while over 1 billion overweight and 2.5 million deaths in the world occur due to this disease.

Rapidly changing dietary habits and a sedentary lifestyle give rise to compounded problems like disruption in the body's energy balance system leading to high levels of obesity. It is estimated that nearly 30 million Indians are at a high risk. Highlighting the need for this new therapy in India, Dr. Ravindra Mittal, Medical Advisor and Head Regulatory Affairs, Zydus Cadila says: 'Considering the rapidly escalating incidence of obesity and the need for new anti-obesity therapies, Slimona will address the needs of family physicians, cardiologists, endocrinologists, gynaecologists, diabetologists and other specialists, who have been looking for a way to have better control and management of obese and overweight patients'.

The phenomenal rise in the occurrence of type 2 diabetes is largely due to the increase in incidence of obesity. Studies show an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and possibly other illnesses such as atherosclerosis, pulmonary diseases, liver and gall bladder diseases, women's diseases including infertility, osteoarthritis, certain types of cancers such as breast, throat, kidney, etc., as a direct consequence of obesity. Slimona heralds a new line of treatment with the central cannabinoid (CB1) receptors playing a key role in controlling food consumption.

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It works by blocking the neuronal CB1 receptors, thereby decreasing the activity of the endocannabinoid system (EC system). These CB1 receptors when activated by the endocannabinoids such as anandamide, increases one's appetite, which is likely to lead to obesity. The EC System regulates food intake and energy balance. It also improves the body's lipid and glucose metabolism. Trials have shown significant reduction in weight and waist circumference i.e. abdominal obesity.

Efficacy and safety in the long-term use is an important feature of any anti-obesity drug. Rimonabant also had a significant impact on metabolic CVD risk factors, greater than that expected by weight loss alone. The group has already begun introducing Slimona to the medical fraternity through Medical Conferences and Continuous Medical Education (CME) initiatives. The drug is priced economically at a rate of Rs. 5.50 per tablet, making it economical to a wide patient group. Emphasizing this point, Mr. Ashok Bhatia, Head BU-7, Zydus Cadila says: 'The price of Slimona, has been thoughtfully fixed to benefit the large patient population in all classes. We will harness the full thrust of the Zydus Marketing teams to ensure that this vitally needed drug is available to doctors across the country – even in smaller cities and towns'.

The introduction of Slimona will boost the group's presence in the Chronic care segment. Zydus Cadila currently markets products in cardiology, diabetology and neurology segments strengthening the Chronic care portfolio and ranks the No. 1 CVS player in the participated segment. The group's leading brands in the chronic care segment include Aten, Atorva, Depin and Amlodac.

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