CSIR's polymer gets US patent; USV to license know-how

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has received a United States patent on an innovative process to make sevelamer, a generic polymer that treats toxic excess of phosphate in the body caused by chronic renal failure. The patent is a culmination of work done by CSIR's constituent lab in Pune. the National Chemical Laboratory, on a mandate initially given by Mumbai-based drug company USV Ltd.

USV had acquired the patent rights from CSIR last year, following which it further undertook the prosecution of the application, NCL's Dr. M.G. Kulkarni told newsmen. Dr. Kulkarni's team developed the alternative process that received the patent.

As per the agreement, USV had the first right to license the know-how and acquire the patent rights, he said, and USV exercised this option. USV had approached NCL in mid-2003 to develop an innovative process to manufacture the polymer. NCL developed the process and CSIR filed the patent application in India, and the US.

NCL's scientists developed a cost-effectiveprocess to manufacture sevelamer, the phosphate-absorbing polymer. Tft'e process NCL reduces the manufacturing time and the process chemicals requirements and is easy to scale up. USV has made a one time payment, and no further milestone payments are involved, he said, citing confidentiality for not giving details. This development is significant as a technologically novel process received a US patent and has been found commercially attractive by a pharma company, Dr. Kulkarni said.

The recent patent success comes against the backdrop of the Centre's efforts to get more public-funded institutions to file patents and work with the industry to commercialise research efforts. With 128 patents in 2006-2007, the CSIR accounts for about 47 per cent of the total US patents granted to Indians, excluding non-resident Indians and foreign assignees, said Mr. R.K. Gupta, Head of CSIR's IP Management Division. The final patent on the CSIR-developed innovative polymer will be issued by the US Patent Office in approximately four months, said Pharmaceutical Patent Attorneys, LLC, the New Jersey-based firm who prosecuted the patent for its Indian client.