

MISPLACED CONCERNS

'PET: A globally accepted pharma packaging solution'

With more and more brand-owners now shifting their focus to unbreakable, greener & value-added packaging, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) has attained a totally new dimension. This trend is now clearly visible in the pharmaceuticals sector as well. A recently held national seminar on 'PET: The Globally Accepted Pharma Packaging Solution' on April 29, 2015 at Mumbai, detailed holistically the advantages of PET packaging for pharmaceuticals and addressed the perceived notions and myths in regard to the packaging material.

Over 200+ invitees from the end-to-end community including brand owners of pharmaceutical products from all over the country, PET bottle suppliers, and resin & additive suppliers attended the event.

The seminar was organized by the PET Division of Reliance Industries Ltd. – India's leading supplier of PET resin – in association with Holland Colours (HCA), one of the renowned manufacturers of colourants and additives; and ASB, a global leaders in single-stage blowing machines.



Dr. S. Sivaram

The idea behind the seminar was to engage with the end-user industry and clear the myths about usage of PET as a packaging material for pharmaceuticals and to appraise them on the current scenario, market trends and global developments. Brand-owners benefited by getting technical queries addressed holistically by the experts in the field.

The keynote address at the seminar was delivered by Dr. S. Sivaram, CSIR Bhatnagar Fellow & Former Director, National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune.

Concerns on PET misplaced

Dr. Vijay Habbu, Reliance Indus-

tries Ltd., pointed out that recently raised concerns on PET including the presence of di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP) & other phthalate plasticizers, antimony and bisphenol-A (BPA) in pharmaceutical products packed in PET containers have been incorrectly attributed to PET. "PET neither contains nor needs phthalates of any kind. Antimony leaching, if any, is well below the migration limits set by Government regulatory bodies, and fears about estrogenic effects caused by antimony from PET bottles are groundless," he observed.

Furthermore, he added, PET has a totally different chemistry than other plastics, and BPA is never used in PET manufacture at any stage. "Colourants used in pharmaceutical PET bottles are compliant with FDA and other food regulations."

Comparing glass and PET bottles, Dr. Habbu pointed out that PET is friendlier to human health and environment compared to glass. While the polymer can, and is, completely recycled, it is not done so for pharmaceutical bottles due to strict regulations in the pharmaceuticals industry, business reasons and technological difficulties. "In contrast, glass bottles have no outlet other than recycling back for pharma packaging," he added.

Regulatory nod

Just as the Indian Government permits the use of PET for packaging of pharmaceuticals, so do many other international agencies. As a consequence of these approvals, PET containers are used globally for pharma packing by international companies and brands,



including for the packing of liquid formulations meant for the most vulnerable (immune-deficient) populations. "PET has been around for more than 60 years, but there are no epidemiologically adverse observations globally. No case has been reported on any occupational hazards faced by the work-force engaged in PET manufacture nor is there any clinical evidence correlating any ailment in the workforce with PET chemistry. PET is one of the safest materials known to man," he added.

Widely used in the world

Mr. John Kleiboer, Area Sales Manager, Indian sub-continent and Africa, HCA, PET has emerged as a viable and preferred alternative to glass due to its properties such as recyclability, weight reduction and unbreakable nature. For the pharmaceutical industry, PET bottles incorporate UV blockers and/or are

coloured with food grade dyes. The material is widely used in Europe for pharma packaging, particularly in the Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and France, although it is not so common in Northern Europe.

A representative from ASB, a leading supplier of PET bottle making machinery, noted that the Japanese company has supplied more than 1,000 machines globally for production of PET containers for pharmaceutical applications along with over 2,500 molds.

According to him, Single Stage Technology is the preferred way for production of pharma bottles, as it ensures contamination-free bottles with zero wastage.

Mr. A.K. Talwar, Director, SCM

Strategic and Plant Purchase, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd., also shared his company's positive experiences of PET.

'PET being targeted'

Mr. Subramanian, Sunrise Containers, one of the largest PET bottle suppliers, pointed to a concerted effort by certain groups to target PET packaging of pharmaceutical products, after efforts to target liquor packaging – a large, and growing market – failed. "The gameplan is to extend this to other applications, and ensure a monopoly for glass packaging," he warned.

Dr. Subhash B. Rijhwani, a veteran from Indore, cautioned that if regulators in India go ahead and ban the use of PET bottles for pharma packaging, India would be the first country in the world to do so!

TOP PERFORMERS

Reliance Industries overtakes ONGC to become India's most profitable firm

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) has overtaken state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) to become the nation's most profitable company, posting a consolidated net profit of Rs. 23,566-crore in the 2014-15 fiscal. ONGC, which posted a consolidated net profit of Rs. 18,334-crore in 2014-15, slipped to number three, behind RIL and Tata Consultancy Services, India's largest IT firm, according to earning data of listed firms available on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) accessed by a leading business newspaper.

ONGC had for long held the pole position as India's most profitable firm. It remained on top till 2013-14 when it posted a consolidated net profit of Rs.



26,506.53-crore. That year RIL had a net profit of Rs. 22,493-crore.

RIL, which has presence from oil to yarn to retail, has seen profits grow by a CAGR of 10.75% over the past one

decade. In contrast ONGC's profit has seen 1.96% CAGR growth in the same period. In 2005-06, RIL's consolidated net profit was Rs. 9,398-crore. In the same year, ONGC had reported a net profit of Rs. 15,397.63-crore.