Aspirations for collaboration can be bigger and bolder in US-India Biopharma & Healthcare Summit 2010

The Summit focussed on the need for greater and more transparent collaborations, and the perils of spending more money protecting early-stage intellectual property (IP) than on early-stage research.
spent protecting early-stage intellectual property (IP) than on early-stage research, and singled out tech transfer offices, in particular, as standing in the way of patent pooling. Amgen’s Senior Vice President Research David Lacey was more direct, saying that pre-commercial collaboration and expansion of R&D networks falls in the cross hairs of IP lawyers, including big pharma attorneys, who look to protect everything they can as IP. It is already difficult for lawyers to sign off on one-to-one partnerships, said Lacey, who predicted that hashing out terms for a pre-commercial network could be a Herculean task. “We basically have to decide that we don’t like intellectual property lawyers to do this, because we would be so tangled up in language,” Lacey said.

McKinsey and Company presented the USA-India Chamber of Commerce commissioned Position Paper at the summit. McKinsey & Co. researchers outlined four barriers that prevent multinational companies from capitalising on the opportunity. These include firstly, little awareness of the most critical healthcare needs; secondly, access and supply chain challenges; thirdly, affordability and finally, a failure to align products and business models to the unique needs of the segment.

To overcome these barriers, international firms must innovate locally and across the value chain. Or put another way, they should turn India and China into a ‘second home market’, McKinsey India Principal Vikas Bhadoria told those attending the summit, with the same level of C-suite focus as traditionally enjoyed by the US and Europe. Supply chain and health system challenges mean life science companies must look to non-healthcare examples for innovation at the bottom of the pyramid, such as leveraging mobile phones for e-payment and e-medicine solutions, McKinsey analysts say. Infrastructure challenges may mean utilising community health workers on bicycles or motorcycles, and developing new formulations that will not require refrigeration. Companies may need to minimise cost per purchase by developing single-serve packages, or invest in education for rural health care workers.

Creating communication networks
USA-India Chamber of Commerce has created net-

work between local and global innovation communities – academia and industry, which necessarily do not communicate with each other said Dr Barry Bloom of the Harvard School of Public Health. Seed innovation in Indian academia has been suboptimal, pointed out Kiran Majumdar, Chairman, Biocon. To stay ahead of the innovation curve Biocon has actively collaborated with John Hopkins, as Majumder opined that a huge amount of learning can be shared between US and Indian academic institutions. She also announced endowment scholarships for post doctoral candidates at Koch Institute of MIT.

Finding the ideal network
While investment and capital exists for the right opportunities, investment opportunities panelists felt the need for the right networks that help capital and investors to access ideas and generate value creation opportunities. The ideal network has a few stakeholders closely connect-
ed in real time. It will bring the best of what different parties have to offer, ie., domain knowledge from global investors, an intimate understand-
ing of the realities of India (strengths, weaknesses and appropriate assessment of risk) from Indian investors / VCs and a keen understanding of how to enhance value creation from MNC pharma.

The discussions and energ-

y at this year’s summit high-

light that greater opportunities exist for US India BioPharma collaborations and the power of frequent high quality inter-

actions between critical stake-

holders that can catalyse and shape the nature and trajectory of the opportunity.