

HD Interview: CSL keen to use life-saving pharmaceutical expertise to further benefit China's healthcare system: chairman

BY ytbjb

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MELBOURNE, Dec. 12 (Xinhua) -- An Australia-headquartered global pharmaceutical giant has voiced enthusiasm about its current economic relationship with **China**, expecting more cooperation to provide **Chinese** people with more life-saving products after major negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) concluded between Beijing and Canberra.

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CSL Limited, which has over 12,000 staff in more than 27 countries, is a specialty biotechnology **company** that researches, develops, manufactures and markets products to treat and prevent serious human medical conditions. Its vaccines and plasma protein biotherapy products have enabled thousands of people around the world to **lead** normal healthy lives.

In a recent exclusive interview with Xinhua, Professor John Shine, chairman of CSL, said his **company** very much values its relationship with **China**, where, as a major force in the Asian market, CSL already employs approximately 120 staff in five major cities and supplies a large amount of albumin products.

"Clearly **China** is a rapidly growing global economy, in the pharmaceutical area, it's probably growing at about five times the rate of the U.S.' market," said Shine. In the 2013 to 2014 period, the **company** sold 300 **million** U.S. dollars worth of albumin in **China**, which according to media reports was a 29 percent surge compared to the previous year, making it the top producer, from that perspective.

Albumin is a life-saving product that is derived from human plasma, which is used to stabilize blood pressure in shock or sepsis patients, who might also be albumin-deficient, as well as treating burn victims and a number of other serious conditions. According to CSL's figures, the **Chinese** market of albumin was valued at almost 1.4 **billion** U.S. dollars in 2013.

Currently, CLS doesn't have collaboration with any **Chinese** companies in medicine production, but is involved in quite detailed discussions with some potential candidates because the **company** believes it's "very important" due to **China's** large population.

Shine told Xinhua that CSL has a strong interest in opportunities to help expand healthcare in **China**, and is seeking to share its best practices in the plasma sector, exploring how it might contribute in areas such as plasma collection, drug safety control and new product development in **China**.

"Clearly we have a lot of expertise in the fractionation of plasma, we also have a lot of experience in working with governments and ensuring the highest quality of products," he said.

"So we hope that through an according collaboration, we can contribute to increasing the safety of blood products and increasing the availability to the **Chinese** population."

The chairman also expressed his enthusiasm for the recently inked FTA between **China** and Australia, saying it would enhance the environment for CSL's future collaboration and interaction with **China**.

Regarding challenges to growth in the **Chinese** market where CSL has been prominent for over a decade, Shine, who is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, believes one major issue is

to understand more about the requirements of the **Chinese** healthcare system and how CSL can more effectively use its products in the context of the system itself.

Currently, CSL distributes albumin to hospitals in **China** through a third party, but it would like to work more closely with the hospital system itself.

"I don't think there are any major impediments, it's simply an education for us, and being able to communicate about the products we have to be relevant to people in **China** and let them understand the quality of our products,"he stressed.

Referring to the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in west Africa, Shine disclosed his **company** had been talking with the Gates foundation who works with the World Health Organization.

In his opinion, unfortunately, only 40 percent of people infected with the virus survive, and those who have survived have quite high levels of antibodies against the virus in their blood." So we have been discussing with the Gates foundation how CSL might help to purify those antibodies, and make therapeutic products to help protect people against Ebola,"he said.

CSL has enormous leading expertise in the purification of such antibodies, but Shine said there are a lot of logistical difficulties in collecting plasma from people in western Africa and transferring that plasma to manufacturing sites in America, Europe or Australia."So there's quite a lot to work through."

In October, CSL announced an agreement to acquire Novartis' global influenza vaccine business for 275 **million** U.S. dollars, which will be combined with CSL's existing vaccines and pharmaceutical subsidiary, bioCSL.

The **acquisition** would create the second-largest vaccine **company** in the global influenza industry, with manufacturing plants in the U.S., UK, Germany and Australia.

According to Shine, CSL, which has a long history preparing for pandemic influenza, hopes to maintain its leading position internationally with its influenza vaccine.

"We have all the technology and manufacturing capability to move very quickly. Once a new virus is identified, CSL can quickly isolate it and develop vaccines against it. **China** is a major vaccine producer, so the **company** can 'work quite closer with many groups in **China** who work in that area' to deal with a global outbreak of diseases," he said.

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