Business News

Herald Sun

Business

Malaria meds compete with dysfunction in pharmaceutical market

- **by: John Beveridge**
- From: **Herald Sun**
- December 03, 2013 12:00AM

WHICH medicine would you rather market - a highly portable malaria treatment for children that could save millions of lives or a faster treatment for erectile dysfunction?

Suda Ltd doesn't have to choose because it is developing both but the depressing fact of pharmaceutical life is that the big commercial returns do not necessarily correlate with the humanitarian need.

The erectile dysfunction market is estimated at about $4.1 billion a year while the malaria treatment market is about $500 million, largely reflecting the wealth of those suffering the problem rather than the size of the clinical need given that malaria kills about 640,000 people a year.

Fortunately the malaria treatment, called Artimist and delivered with a simple spray under the tongue, is the most advanced of Suda's product lines after coming through phase three testing on 150 children in multiple African sites with flying colours.

Compared to intravenous quinine which only worked in 41 per cent of cases, Artimist reduced parasite count by greater than 90 per cent in 96 per cent of patients in 24 hours.

Executive chairman Stephen Carter said the real advantage of Artimist was the ease of use with the spray much more portable, easy to use and more durable in hot climates.

"When children are dehydrated and sick, this will allow them to be treated quickly and easily in their village rather than the dangers and disruption of travelling," said Stephen.

Suda is hoping to move to a trade sale or licensing deal of Artimist with a large pharmaceutical company by the second half of 2014 so it can concentrate on its remaining oral spray formulations of popular drugs.

While Sildenafil, the active ingredient in viagra, is possibly one of the most awaited, other promising sprays include fast treatments for migraine headache, chemotherapy caused nausea and vomiting, hypertension and pre-procedural anxiety.

Suda is a **speculative buy** that combines a third world social conscience with some high potential first world commercial drugs.

Dr John Holaday will be hoping it is second time lucky after resubmitting the drug Moxduo with the US Food and Drug Administration.

The first submission by the QRX Pharma chief executive didn't end well with a "complete response letter"

that gave the thumbs down while remaining vague about why the drug was declined.

After some meetings it became clear that the FDA were concerned about the potential for breathing problems from the 3-2 combination of the well known and understood drugs morphine and oxycodone.

There were no negative findings on safety or effectiveness and Dr Holaday is hopeful that the more than 30 million extra data points that have been added in the new submission prove conclusively that the drug has a respiratory safety advantage over either morphine or oxycodone alone.

If all goes well, QRX could be releasing the acute pain drug with its commercial partner Actavis by the second half of 2014, although as shareholders learned the hard way last time a refusal cannot only offend but drive the share price off a cliff.

The upside comes not just in an FDA approval for MoxDuo but in a development called stealth beadlets planned for the sustained release version of MoxDuo. These prevent the "Hillbilly Heroin" style of prescription drug abuse in which opiate pills are ground up and then ingested.

QRX Pharma is a **speculative buy** with the capacity for rewards and disappointment.

Top Stories

Bieber's team 'must take responsibility'

UPDATE: A MELBOURNE Belieber opens up about the star's "rushed" meet and greet with fans at Rod Laver last night and fears the star could burn out.

Brown punch hits world headlines

THE Gold Coast Suns' dust-up in a trendy Los Angeles nightclub has attracted international attention.

- **Visit our homepage for all today's news**