

# OncQuest gears up for CAP accreditation to target global diagnostic markets

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Nandita Vijay, Bangalore

As part of its organic growth strategy, OncQuest, a Dabur group company, pioneer in molecular diagnostic oncology is now aiming at College of American Pathologists (CAP) accreditation. The accreditation, which is expected to come through in mid-2007 will help the three-year-old company target global markets in the West and give it a foothold in the contract research space.

OncQuest, the largest facility in South East Asia has initiated a series of discussions with several contract research organizations (CROs). The cancer diagnostic major which is already armed with NABL accreditation, requires an international endorsement to help it tap the potential contract research business opportunities to generate 50 per cent of its earnings from this area in the coming years. It also intends to capitalize on the opportunities in medical tourism through a cost-effective strategy. OncQuest offers high-end cancer detection test at Rs 20,000, which is one fifth of the cost of a similar test in the US.

"CAP certification will drive our CRO business. Right now we hold 80 per cent of the cancer diagnostic market which is valued at Rs 150 crore where 50 per cent is dominated by hospital diagnostics and the remaining by regional diagnostic players," Vivek Trikha, head-Diagnostics, OncQuest told Pharmabiz during an interaction.

"If all these plans take shape we will not only be able to prove our reliability and fast turnaround service but allow introduce new technology at a cost-effective price which is still unaffordable in India," averred Trikha.

In the last six months OncQuest launched two new technologies Fluorescent-in-Situ-Hybridization (FISH) and Cytogenetics.

Future is business will include introduction of advanced technology and market expansion. Currently, OncQuest offers 10,000 tests. It is recognised as the single largest communication link between pathologists and clinicians.

Globally lifestyle disorders, HIV and tuberculosis are known to be the three largest killers. Cancer is the fourth dreaded disease, which needs diagnostics for early detection and management, he added.

Cancer diagnostics is a sunrise industry holding immense potential. Around three per cent of the Indian population suffer from some form of cancer. The most common among women are breast and ovarian. Among men it is oral, prostate and lung. In the US, the lab diagnostic market is valued at \$35 billion. There are many US FDA approved technology in diagnostics ready to enter in India but cost is a deterrent for patients here.

The Rs 150 crore lab medicine markets in India, which is registering 17-20 per cent growth, is affected with issues like non-inclusion of the cancer diagnostics in medical insurance that is retarding the growth of the sector. However, OncQuest has managed to bring in the latest tests like for instance the Real Time PCR which is the best technology used to monitor drug efficacy, a critical component in cancer care which costs 20 per cent lower than many labs at Mumbai and New Delhi.

OncQuest has its presence in eight locations and has 35 specimen collection centres covering all major Indian cities, which cater to patients in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its specimen collection centres, the outsourced business is managed by Medibiz which is tasked with sample collection and transferring it to its Mother Lab in New Delhi, a centre of excellence in diagnostic oncology. Among its plans in 2007 are to have an additional 8-10 collection centres. It is also scouting for entrepreneurs with labs expand its operations.