

Thursday, August 06, 2009

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Wednesday, August 05, 2009 08:00 IST

**Nandita Vijay, Bangalore**

OncQuest Laboratories Ltd is exploring South East Asia to market its range of novel cancer molecular markers. Through its hub & spoke model, the company is keen to encash potential alliances and joint venture partnerships in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.

The company hopes to have a presence in Singapore next month. It is awaiting the accreditation from College of American Pathologists which will allow it chalk a strategy for its entry into Europe too, said Vivek Trikha, head - diagnostics, OncQuest Laboratories told Pharmabiz.

The domestic operations are taking off through 50 locations. It is also present in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its advanced lab in New Delhi also focuses on targeted therapies that help assess the efficacy of the latest oncology drugs. The positive response for molecular markers is now sought after by clinicians and pharma companies, he added.

Since June end, the pioneer in molecular markers has introduced tests for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Other tests which have evoked a major interest among medical fraternity for better management of cancers are: K- ras mutation analysis for colorectal & lung cancers. The NPM1 Exon 12 mutation analysis is for patients with acute myeloid leukaemia having normal karyotypes. Paclitaxel toxicity test helps to determine dose titration of paclitaxel drug and predict its toxicity in breast cancer & other solid tumours. Thiopurine Methyl Transferase (TPMT) Polymorphisms is a vital prognostic tool to predict thiopurine drug toxicity in acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, renal transplantation and Crohn's disease. In - house development of primers and probes specific for HIV & HBV drug resistance, UGT1A1 gene polymorphism is on the cards.

Global trends indicate early diagnosis and defining prognosis with the help of molecular markers to make haematological malignancies more targeted With increasing awareness in diagnosis and prognostic of molecular markers to asses haematological malignancies, cancer diagnostics in India is undergoing a major transition. New technologies help detect gene aberrations like molecular translocations and deletions specific to each entity of haematological malignancies, said Trikha.

Other advanced technologies are Multicolour (M)- FISH or spectral karyotyping, colour banding (Rx -or Zoo- FISH), Fibre -FISH, comparative genomic hybridisation (CGH) and micro array & CGH array identification of genetics alterations at chromosomal and gene level in entire genome.

These studies have helped identify 50 per cent of new structural aberrations in lymphomas and myeloid malignancies, proving to play a key role in cancer pathogenesis. In congenital disorders, CGH array facilitated the identification of hidden micro-deletion, micro duplication. Efforts are on to detect low copy viral infection, like human papilloma virus (HPV) during indicial stage of cervix cancer by using FISH with viral probes.

There is limited awareness about cancer diagnostics, is restricting the demand of the tests. For this, a close linked up between clinician and lab scientist is necessary, said Trikha

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