

MedGenome raises Rs. 24 cr via Series A Fund to expand operations in India

*Nandita Vijay, Bengaluru**Saturday, September 06, 2014, 08:00 Hrs [IST]*

MedGenome, a clinical genomic service provider, has received ₹ 24 crore (\$4 million) in Series A Funding to increase its India presence. Its business model is designed to tap clinical diagnostics opportunities in hospitals for cancer and inherited gene disorders. However it is also looking to attract global gene sequencing projects as an additional revenue generation source.

The company sees that it is vital for the government of India (GoI) to either reduce or slash the 25-30 per cent customs duty on molecular diagnostic consumables to provide affordable clinical genomics tests.

Currently, India imports 60 per cent of the consumables for molecular diagnostics. Going by the increasing incidence of cancer in the country and with around 6 per cent of the Indian population diagnosed with inherited diseases, the Union government should take an immediate decision on the import duty of the consumables. In the short run, it could be an expensive proposition but the long term advantages are immense. It could benefit patients significantly and the clinical genomic tests would be far more competitive to attract projects in the area of genome sequencing, said Sam Santosh, chief executive officer, and chairman, MedGenome.

The company with over 1,000 employees in India and US, has now offers doctors at AIIMS, Apollo Medanta-The Medicity, Gangaram, Manipal and Narayana Nethralaya among others to opt for clinical genomics. It has developed a platform incorporating proprietary tools and algorithms to identify new disease genes and mutations. Its OncoMD is a cancer analytics platform with information on over 1.2 million cancer mutations allowing accurate interpretation of genomic variations.

"Our range of single gene tests, disease panels and investigational for oncology, pediatrics, prenatal, cardiology, ophthalmology, neurology, ENT and endocrinology are seen to be an answer to early and preventive diagnosis. From a patient perspective, the tests though priced from ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 20,000, are economical in the long run. However with rising awareness and an educated workforce in India the cost of sequencing will begin to drop driven by volumes, he added.

The MedGenome chief was here in Bengaluru to set up the 10,000 sq. ft. molecular diagnostic and proteomics lab in Narayana Health City to address the health issues and overcome challenges of patient counseling and assist doctors to adopt a focused approach to comprehend the science of the disease to extend the required treatment.

Indian genomic market is valued around \$100 million with a growth rate of 25 percent. The country is a much-sought-after hub for contract research and medical tourism. Clinical genomic test providers would gain as they could leverage on the availability medical-information technology expertise to undertake global projects. The company research has collaborations with Tata Memorial Hospitals, Institute of Bioinformatics, Madras Diabetic Research Foundation. It is now intends to utilise its domain expertise and maximise India's population structure to identify disease genes.