

Genomics-driven research & diagnostics impacts current practice of medicine in India: MedGenome CEO

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The impact of genomics-driven research and diagnostics is seen to have a bearing on the current practice of medicine in India, which is witnessing a discontinuity in the medical diagnostics space with the advent of advanced genetic technologies impacting the healthcare industry. With a boost in the spending on biotechnology and life science ventures, both government labs and private entities are bringing in new tests addressing rare as well as common diseases, said Girish Mehta, CEO of MedGenome India and Asia.

Genomics-based diagnostics have been able to provide pin-point accuracy something which was not possible through conventional methodologies resulting in the increasing acceptance and usage of precision medicine, he added.

India today can boast of world-class infrastructure supported by manpower trained in science which has resulted in the local processing of most genetic tests. The past 5 years have seen increased clinical awareness and the usage of genetic test reports to aid clinical decisions related to disease areas such as oncology, neurology, gynaecology, ophthalmology, nephrology, etc. The steep decline in cost of these tests and its easy availability in India have been some of the key factors which have driven the growth of the genomics-based diagnostics industry, Mehta told Pharmabiz in an email.

Sharing his insights on the performance of genomic diagnostic industry and its future prospects, Mehta pointed out that the availability of Illumina's X-10 NGS (Next generation sequencing) machines has reduced the sequencing of whole human genome to a few days that too at very affordable cost of US\$1500.

Combined with exponential increase in availability of data on pathogenic gene mutations have led to meaningful and usable clinical reporting. For instance, cancer chemotherapy is soon going to be a thing of the past. Early genetic screening aided by information on the genes help in accurate diagnostic applications like targeted therapies in oncology which are becoming more available with over 100 different treatment lines and drugs in clinical trials. "With such approaches, there will be a growing demand for precision medicine that will accelerate the growth of the genomic industry. In fact this sector garnered an over 50 per cent growth in India and abroad, isolating US and China. Going forward this momentum will continue," he said.

India has seen a huge increase in companies entering genomics-driven services to offer varied genetic tests ranging from prenatal to disease prediction at competitive prices. This together with a growing awareness about these tests in the medical fraternity, could further lower the cost and that could impel its implementation by government agencies such as CGHS. All this could only bolster the promising growth prospects of the sector, said Mehta.