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India to focus on diagnostics

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India to focus on diagnostics, says Dr M K Bhan



New Delhi: Despite tremendous opportunities in the disease screening, the areas such as personalized diagnostics have not seen much effort. Dr M K Bhan, secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under Government of India, pointed this out at the conference on "Molecular Diagnostics: Challenges vis-Ã?Æ?Ã?Â -vis Growth Potential", organized by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The conference was held with support from the DBT on June 8, 2012, at New Delhi. Giving the keynote address, Dr Bhan said, "India needs to move from the current space of being a kit producer to one offering novel platforms, tests and technologies in molecular diagnostics. Similar revolution as has happened in the vaccines needs to take place in this segment. The increased expenditure on reagents because of import has been the biggest hurdle in affordability. Therefore, there is a need for alternatives and a stringent quality analysis system."

Dr Bhan praised the partnership between New Delhi-based J Mitra and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology (ICGEB) that resulted in various diagnostic products. He said there is a lack of such examples. "The mechanical design expertise is still lacking in India. The needs in the diagnostic sector, such as marketability, need to be addressed. We need leaders in this area as creating the infrastructure is not enough," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rajesh Jain, chairman, CII National Committee on Biotechnology and joint managing director, Panacea Biotec, said, "The global diagnostics market is witnessing a phenomenal growth, triggered by various applications and technological sub-segments of molecular diagnostics. The increase in the ageing population and high incidence of chronic diseases only work to fuel this growth world over."

Dr Jain further added, "Diagnostics is an important component to improve the value chain in the health sector, as it involves accurate detection of health risks at the early stages. Besides helping treatment and disease management, diagnostics reduces subsequent health issues and recurring costs. Molecular diagnostics is one of the emerging disciplines in this sphere."

The objective of the day long conference was to provide a forum to present and discuss the role of key stakeholders towards realizing India's potential in diagnostics especially molecular diagnostics. During the conference, the regulator and policymakers from the Department of Biotechnology and the DCGI deliberated along with industry experts and academicians on various issues associated with the industry. The stakeholders also deliberated on various trade & practices for promoting collaboration between academia, industry and healthcare professionals.

Growing at a CAGR of 19 per cent, the global molecular diagnostics market is expected to reach $15 billion by 2014.The fastest growing segment is infectious diseases, enjoying the status as the dominant segment with its 21 per cent market share. The next fastest growing segment is oncology testing, given the rising cases of cancer. The future growth is expected to come from genetic testing, blood screening testing and neurological testing.