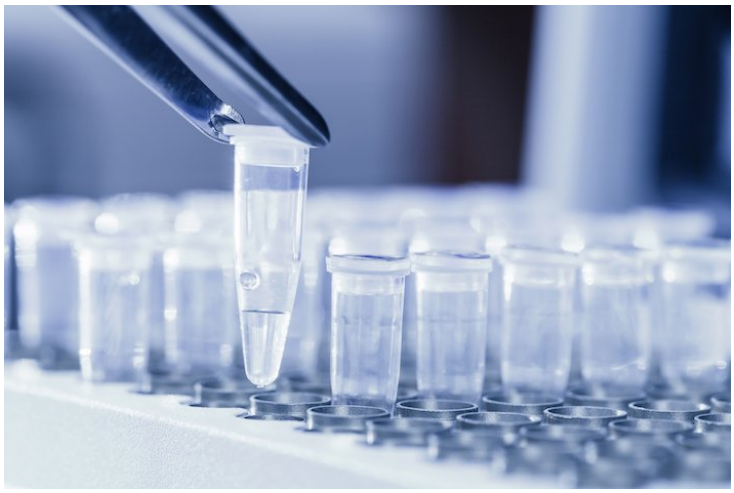
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APAC capturing substantial share of PoC molecular diagnostics market

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PoC molecular diagnostic solutions are strengthening the fight against chronic ailments like cancer, as global consumer becomes more aware about the benefits of early diagnosis and faster methods to test for possible infections



The point of care (PoC) molecular diagnostics industry has grown immensely over the years, becoming one of the fastest growing fields in medical sector. The industry has risen to prominence for a number of factors, including the capacity to address a range of applications such as infectious diseases that have historically been difficult to study and diagnose.

Molecular diagnostics has experienced a major shift from centralized laboratories to decentralized POC testing. Benefits such as ease, convenience, faster turnaround time, and the potential to improve patient outcomes is expanding the application of molecular diagnostics in remote or low-resourced areas.

POC molecular testing includes portable devices, test kits, and assays used for detecting and diagnosing diseases in human samples such as blood, swab, and serum. It enables physicians to vastly improve the quality of patient care by combining rapid diagnosis with treatment division.

With increasing need for PCR testing and other equipment amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the global market for POC molecular diagnostics is booming and could reach an annual valuation of nearly $4.8 billion by 2027. The Asia Pacific (APAC) region is likely to capture a substantial share of the market, considering the worsening COVID-19 situation in numerous APAC countries and advancing oncological research.

Advancing research in oncology across the Asia Pacific

In Asia Pacific countries, the adoption of POC molecular diagnostics solutions is being influenced by three factors, namely - availability, affordability, and awareness. The regional regulators, biotech firms, and diagnostics companies are focusing on facilitating easy access to the latest precision medicine tools and technologies.

The occurrence cancer has increased significantly in Asia Pacific over the past decade or so. In 2020 alone, the region recorded more than 9.5 million new cancer cases, according to WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer. Leading health tech companies in the region are investing to advance research on molecular diagnostics and its potential in cancer diagnosis.

In May 2021, China's Genetron Health had collaborated with Siemens Healthineers to advance lung cancer diagnosis and treatment in China. The companies aim to offer personalized diagnosis and treatment for patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) with the help of standardized molecular diagnostics and testing for cancer.

The market for POC molecular diagnostics in Asia Pacific will also grow on account of increased accessibility and affordability of healthcare facilities. The advent of cost-effective generic solutions by local vendors has been a key factor behind the rising adoption rate.

Increasing need for PCR and RT-PCR testing kits in Asia amid COVID-19

The second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in countries like India has completely overwhelmed the COVID-19 testing infrastructure. Across cities and states, reports show that individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 infection have been unable to get themselves tested, with labs completely booked due to extraordinary case load and staff getting infected by the disease. Experts from the Harvard Medical School have pointed out that India's testing capacity is far short of what is required currently. The country has ramped up testing capacity significantly since March 2020 to nearly between 1.5 and 2 million as of May 2021.

However, compared to March last year when the pandemic began in India, the daily reported cases have gone up by almost four times while testing hasn't even doubled. These trends indicate that the demand for PCR and RT-PCR testing kits could increase exponentially in the near future.

Across the country, biotech companies are rising to the challenge and developing novel COVID-19 testing solutions. Over the past year, many of these solutions have become commercially available for frontline workers, clinical labs, as well as home use. While established biotech firms continue to innovate, India's startup ecosystem is also gearing up to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mylab Discovery Solutions is one such startup. The molecular diagnostics startup's Mylab PathoDetect COVID-19 Qualitative PCR kit was among the first in the country to receive commercial approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) last year. Following the approval, Mylab had partnered with biotech giant Serum Institute of India and local firm AP Globale.

As COVID-19 cases surge exponentially amid the second wave, the startup has recently introduced new mobile testing labs across India to help meet COVID-19 testing demand. Mylab also disclosed that it is working on a new POC testing solution that can be installed anywhere, enabling people to get themselves tested for COVID-19 without any medical assistance. Reportedly, the startup is working on four to five such projects at the moment.

Ongoing technological advances and surging demand amid the pandemic will continue to fuel the need for PCR tests in India as well as other Asia Pacific countries. Consistent prevalence of diseases like tuberculosis, Hepatitis, flu and serious infections will foster PoC molecular diagnostic industry trends. More than 4.3 million in Southeast Asian region are estimated to have tuberculosis, highlighting the need for quick testing methods.

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