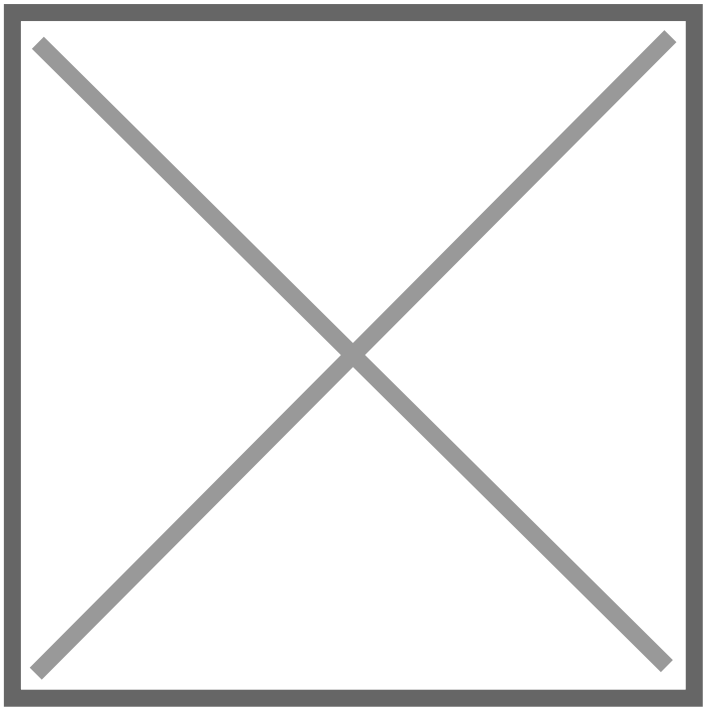
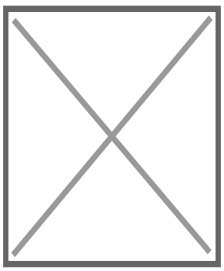


"The global autoimmune diagnostic market is worth $2 billion"

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IMMCO Diagnostics, a US-based company in the field of autoimmune diagnostics, set foot in India last year. In an interview, Dr Vijay Kumar, president, IMMCO Diagnostics, elaborates on the trends and scope in the autoimmune diagnostic segment.

What are the current trends in autoimmune diagnostics?

The field of autoimmune diagnostics is growing due to two main factors: 1) Research has identified many other diseases that are of autoimmune disorders, which only a few years ago the disease pathogenesis was not known. Celiac disease is such an example. 2) Availability of therapeutics for many of the autoimmune disorders places more emphasis on autoimmune diagnostics as the early identification of these disorders will help to better control the disease.

Today autoimmune diseases comprise 80 or more chronic disabling diseases that affect almost every organ system in the body. For example, autoimmune diseases have been described in the nervous, gastrointestinal, endocrine system, skin, skeletal and vascular tissues. In each disease, the immune system may produce autoantibodies to the endogenous antigens, with consequent injury to the host tissues and organs. In many diseases the presence of autoantibodies antedates the disease itself. Some estimates that autoimmune disorders affect 5-7 percent of the population with prevalence as high as 20 percent in the US population. Thus autoimmunity is the underlying cause of more than 80 chronic diseases that affect some 50 million Americans. This estimate may be conservative as we learn more and more of other diseases that are found to have autoimmune origin or counterpart

What are the key products and services offered by IMMCO? What are the latest products/technologies being researched at the company?

IMMCO offers tests for a wide variety of auto-immune disorders such as collagen vascular, gastrointestinal, bullous skin, endocrine, autoimmune liver and neurological disorders. These tests employ immunofluorescence, ELISA and Western blot technologies for the antibody detection. We at present are working on various proprietary technologies for the detection of autoantibodies. This includes a new and simple multiplex technology and many new autoimmune markers for the known and newly identified autoimmune disorders. We expect some of these markers will be in the market place in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Can you elaborate on the genesis of IMMCO?

IMMCO started in 1971 based on the inventions from the university at Buffalo. The first groups of tests offered by the company as a service were in the field of immunodermatology for the detection of pemphigus and pemphigoid (blistering diseases of the skin). Since the beginning autoimmunity has been our focus. IMMCO has established itself a leader in the field of autoimmunity by incorporating pioneering research, clinical laboratory services and novel diagnostic tests to autoimmune diagnostics. We take special emphasis in the personalized attention to our customers that distinguish from others. Our motto is "your partner in autoimmune disease diagnostics"

Is IMMCO planning to broaden its scope beyond autoimmunity in the diagnostics segment?

As I have indicated earlier, our focus is in the field of autoimmunity. However, this does not preclude us from non-autoimmune tests, especially for immunologically mediated disorders. This becomes more relevant as we develop new diagnostic platform.

How do you assess the worldwide autoimmune diagnostics market?

The worldwide market for autoimmune disorders is increasing and continues to increase due to the fact that more and more diseases are being described with autoimmune etiology. Also the availability of new therapeutics will push for the development of suitable bio-markers for these diseases.

Frost & Sullivan estimates that the total European autoimmune disease diagnostics market to reach $700 million in 2011. We believe the total worldwide autoimmune diagnostic market may be as high as $2 billion.

How big is the auto immunity diagnostic opportunity in India? What are your future plans?

It is my understanding that the market of autoimmune diagnostic at this moment is limited. However, I am certain this market is going to grow. I believe there is one America in India who is very affluent and will demand the best in medical care. This alone will drive the market volume. However, the competitiveness in the market field will compromise the revenue. It may be expected that the total autoimmune market by year 2011 could be as high as $50 million.

Rolly Dureha