

Quest Diagnostics extends cancer testing services across India

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Quest Diagnostics India has expanded the ability to access cancer diagnostics services following a successful pilot of the introduction of these services to patients and oncologists in New Delhi. Now, the company has expanded its marketing, service and logistics operation in order to provide cancer testing services to 25 metros and Tier I cities across the country, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Kochi.

Quest Diagnostics, headquartered in the United States, provides the services in India through its full service laboratory in Gurgaon, India and esoteric testing laboratories based in the United States. Recently introduced services include testing to help detect hematological, or blood, cancers using next-generation sequencing, an advanced technique that identifies mutations and variants in an individual's DNA or genome.

Another service is a test that assesses the ROS1 gene mutation status to help determine a patient's response to a certain lung cancer therapy. The company also provides testing for breast, cervical, prostate, soft tissue, bone and several other cancers.

"The incidence of cancer cases is on the rise in India. Today, patients and the treating physician need accurate and reliable diagnostic insights in order to make the right treatment decision," said Mr. Mukul Bagga, managing director, Quest Diagnostics India. "The most exciting and important advances in cancer diagnostics are occurring in the field of genomics and molecular testing. Yet, technology and expertise constraints can limit access by clinicians and patients in India. Clinicians and patients in major cities of India can now access the international experience and clinical operations of Quest Diagnostics, the world leader in diagnostic information services, including cancer testing, in India and the United States."

Quest Diagnostics started operations in India in 2008, with its state-of-the art 65,000 sq. feet laboratory in Gurgaon, Haryana. Since then it has provided a broad spectrum of testing services in cardiology, gynecology, endocrinology, infectious diseases among others. In April 2011 it began a pilot program to provide cancer diagnostic services from its U.S. and Gurgaon labs to patients in the New Delhi/ National Capital Region.

In India, Quest Diagnostics has been first to offer many path-breaking diagnostic testing services in cancer, such as Pap by liquid-based cytology for screening cervical cancer and Leumeta, proprietary plasma based test for leukemia

Quest Diagnostics India has also been one of the pioneers in the field of digital pathology to benefit cancer patients. The advanced digital pathology platform is used to exchange medical information and seek the expert opinion from among a panel of 600 organ-focused Quest experts based in the United States. Data reported at the recently held Indian cancer congress - a retrospective review of 500 cancer cases that were referred for an expert opinion revealed that 40% had their original treatment protocols changed after review of those cases by the panel of Quest experts.

"This service not only helps the clinician but also the patient because it provides an extra measure of quality based on expertise of our U.S. colleagues." said Mr. Mukul Bagga.

Cancer incidence and mortality has been steadily rising with 979,786 cases diagnosed in India in year 2010 to 1,148,757 cases projected by 2020 (APJCP 2010; 11(4): 1045-9). Also as per national representative survey, published in Lancet 2012, May edition, the mortality due to cancer in India was found to be 556,400 cases in 2010. The need of the hour is early detection and prevention as well as accurate diagnosis and monitoring.