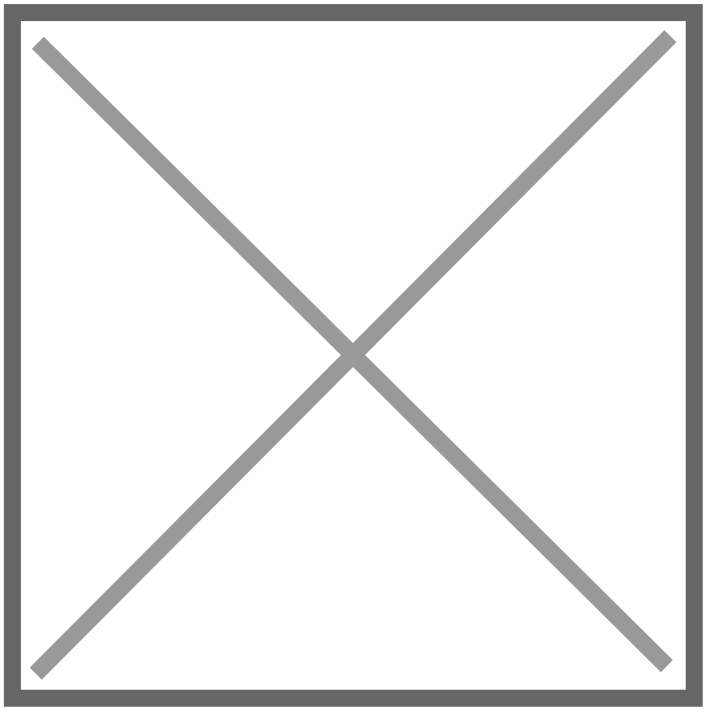
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Multilevel counters slowly replacing beta counters

09 November 2006 | News



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With increasing demand for multilevel platter counters, the sale of beta counters has taken a backseat.

PerkinElmer and Beckman Coulter are the two major players in the beta counters segment in India. There are other smaller players too. "We are leading the market by selling about 30 units per year amounting to $1.5-1.6 million. We have a wide range of models from the basic to the automatic microplate-based units. The cost of each unit is ranges from $ 20,000 to 100,000 depending upon the model," said Yogeendra Dawalkar, sales manager-North, PerkinElmer Life & Analytical Sciences (Indian branch).

Praveen Kulkarni, regional manager, PerkinElmer Life & Analytical Sciences, said, "PerkinElmer has 85 percent of the market share. The local indigenous players who are offering the beta counters at lesser price are meeting the rest of the market. The indigenously developed beta counters are available in the price range of Rs 1-1.5 lakh per unit. High quality and very sensitive beta counters from PerkinElmer are available in the price range of Rs 20Ã¢â?¬â??80 lakh per unit."

Yogeendra Dawalkar said, "The market size for beta counters in India is about $2-3 million. It is more of a replacement market. This is not a very fast growing segment. Worldover, the research is moving away from use of radioactivity in studies due to the hazards involved although sensitivity-wise the studies are very good. In the global scenario, the growth curve of beta counters is flat while in India there is a slight increase in the sale of this instrument in the nuclear power sector."

Echoing similar views, Praveen Kulkarni said, "There is a slowdown in the sale of these counters as the latest multilevel platter counters are in demand from the life sciences area because of their user-friendly and also their eco-friendly nature. These counters are available in the price range of $10,000Ã¢â?¬â??$40,000 per unit. There will be about 20 odd players such as Molecular Devices and BMG that are offering these multilevel counters in India."

What is notable is that there are no repeat customers. This is mainly because of the disposal of radioactive substance in the solution although the measures are taken care of by the vendors. However, the companies have been using beta counters in the drug discovery research, to track the target in cellular studies in life sciences industry.

In the interest of public health and safety, there is a growing need to quantitate the release of radioactivity into the environment. Alpha/beta liquid scintillation analysis (LSA) is a widely used method for the purpose of monitoring radioactivity from alpha and beta radionuclides. The alpha/beta LSA instruments from PerkinElmer deliver the advantages of high counting efficiency (~100 percent for alpha) and high thoroughput. Dissolving the sample in liquid scintillation cocktail completely eliminates the problem of attenuation.

Besides disposal of radioactive substance, the other area of concern for the R&D institutes/biopharma companies is the high level of import duty levied on these counters. Praveen Kulkarni commented, "The volume of imports of beta counters are not much compared to other equipment used in the life sciences sector. At the same time, the number of users are also less. So I feel the government might not have thought of reducing the customs duty for beta counters. However, the industry should lobby for customs duty reduction for beta counters that play a key role in tracking the target in the discovery research space."

Narayan Kulkarni