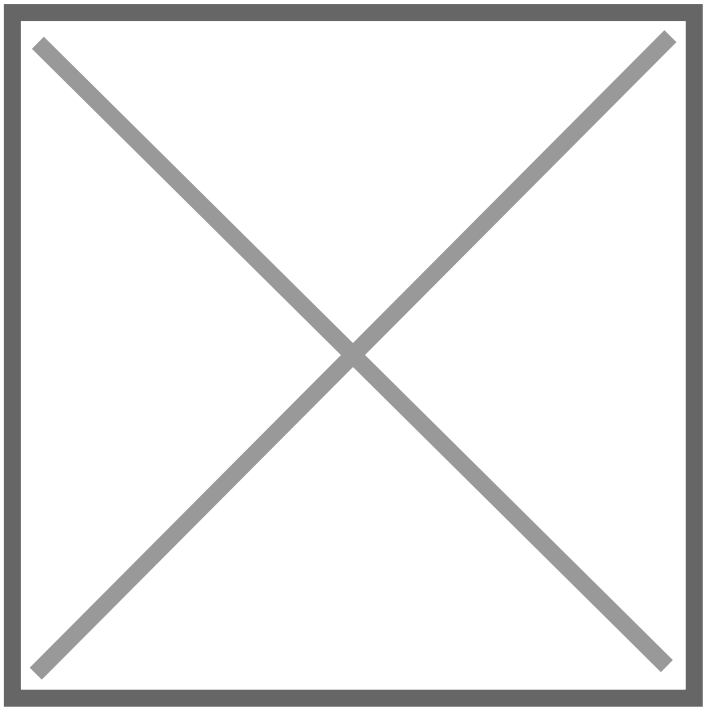
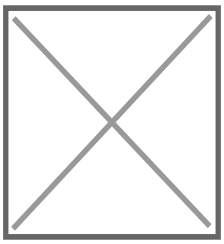
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"Bio-Rad's dengue kit detects virus from the first day of infection"

09 November 2006 | News



"Bio-Rad's dengue kit detects virus from the first day of infection"



-Dhiren Wagle, country manager, Bio-Rad India

In an exclusive interview, Dhiren Wagle details about the recently launched dengue detection kit and the future plans of the company.

Bio-Rad has recently released a dengue diagnostic kit. How different is it from the existing diagnostic methods and how is the market response to it?

The existing dengue test kits available in the market identify the virus indirectly by detecting antibodies against the viral protein and confirm the presence of dengue. Thus tests with these diagnostic kits will show negative results till the fourth to sixth day of the infection. We have introduced the Bio-Rad Platelia Dengue NS1 Antigen kit which is very specific for dengue virus and detects it from the first day of the infection. The test, the first in the Indian market, is based on the specific detection of dengue virus NS1 antigen. So now the doctor has a tool via which he can detect the presence of the virus from the first to the fourth day of the infection, a very critical period, as the sooner the treatment starts, the faster is the patient recovery.

The kit was developed by Bio-Rad in collaboration with the Pasteur Institute in France. The proprietary rights to the technology are with Pasteur institute but Bio-Rad is the sole licensee for this technology.

We launched the kit in the early October and have got a lot of encouraging response. We are getting queries both from the government sector and also the private labs.

What is the current focus of the diagnostic vertical at Bio-Rad?

Within the diagnostics segment, we are currently focusing on four major areas: diabetes management via the HbA1c platform; thalassemia screening; quality control, where we offer products and quality assurance programs; and the blood banking

sector.

We will shortly launch products in the autoimmune segment. Of late, auto immunity incidents are increasing and there are not many diagnostic kits available to screen it. We have a complete panel and the automation, which will add value to this sector.

Then, neonatal screening is another area which is picking up. There is a need for a lot of awareness in this segment as well. Even today these are seen in the country as esoteric tests, only for the elite and effluent. We have the test kits for galatosemia, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, and congenital hypothyroidism, among many others. These kits are based on the Elisa platform and are available from the bench level to the fully automated systems. These are disorders which can cause serious damage to the baby's health. Their early diagnosis will help the doctor to take a corrective step before the actual onset of the disease in babies prone to such disorders.

Second, we are also creating awareness and education in these segments side by side as most of these areas are still state-of-the-art and a lot of labs are still using the earlier age, old home brew methods, as they call it. So we are trying to create awareness for physicians by running regular seminars/workshops for them in associations with the local medical bodies. Recently we tied up with the Quality Council of India (QCI), which is the apex body of accreditation. Along with them we have a joint program called the Bio-Rad QCI awareness program for quality control. We have done a lot of quality control programs in many cities like Lucknow, Chandigarh, Trivandrum, Pune and Kolkata.

In the life sciences sector, what is the current strategy at Bio-Rad?

We are focusing on a lot of growth in the new drug discovery segments like proteomics; biochromatography; and genomics especially on the amplification front. We have got a good response to the Bio-Plex product range, which has been the proven technology for identifying some of the key biomarkers for oncological research worldwide.

We are about to launch the protein-protein interaction systems and will soon get into the area of protein identification, which would make our proteomics range complete.

We are a total solution provider complementing and extending our earlier range of products in the gene expression, gene transfer, gene amplification space. We have also launched microarrays-slide printers, which is also doing well.

Is Bio-Rad India expanding its presence in the country?

We already have direct offices in Gurgoan, which is the headquarters, Mumbai, where we are expanding our office now, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Bangalore. Now we are expanding our infrastructure to serve the smaller towns better. We have sales and service teams in cities like Lucknow, Guwahati, Chandigarh, Trivandrum, Ahmedabad and Pune.

We have also started a technical support hotline since some time. This is probably the first in the industry. It has a 1-800 number which is toll free and is managed by technically qualified personnel to trouble shoot any customer-related operational problems immediately.

Rolly Dureha