

ToRCH testing kits to rescue infants

02 August 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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According to the latest state of the World's Mothers Report from 'Save The Children', more than 300,000 babies die within the first 24 hours of being born in India each year. An innovative, new, low-cost ToRCH testing kit designed in New Zealand aims to help doctors prevent thousands of deaths and assist in reducing India's infant mortality rate.

The brain child of Indian born scientist, Dr Sarita and Anand Kumble of New Zealand company, Pictor Ltd. The revolutionary testing kit provides a simple low cost testing platform for five of the major killers in infants- toxoplasma, rubella, cytomegalovirus and Herpes simplex Virus 1 and 2. The name ToRCH is an acronym for five infectious diseases.

"The ToRCH infections are responsible for causing over 20 percent of deaths in new born infants in India and across the South East Asia. These diseases also cause hearing impairment, eye problems, mental retardation, and autism. Traditional tests examining these pathogens have often been too expensive for many poor families, leaving doctors to make their diagnosis based on symptoms alone" said Dr. Kumble of Pictor Ltd. Used on expectant mothers, Pictor Ltd's test utilises cutting-edge immunodiagnostic technology which allows up to eight tests to be accurately performed together on a specially designed microscope slide, using only a single drop of blood.

Pictor Ltd developed the world-class technology in Auckland, New Zealand, with the aim of offering the low cost diagnostic solutions to developing parts of the world, and has already launched the kits in Thailand and Malaysia with much success.