

India gets its own diagnostic kit for Celiac diseases

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The cost-effective diagnostic test kit is the first of its kind in India for the autoimmune "Celiac disease", which is a lifelong intestinal disorder manifesting as intolerance to certain foods such as wheat, barley, etc., with symptoms like recurring abdominal pain, diarrhoea, and weight loss. The diagnostic kit has been developed by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) through a project sponsored by it with the involvement of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and an industrial partner, J Mitra and Co.

The diagnostic assay test, through this method, will be affordable, rapid, sensitive, and more specific, allowing prompt therapeutic interventions. The assays comprise of two tests: Celiac Microlisa, which is based on indirect Elisa; and Celiac Card which is a point-of-care test giving result in 20 minutes time. These tests are thus very useful in the screening of patients suspected to have this disease and can be done in any part of the country. Furthermore, this test does not require a sophisticated laboratory and highly skilled personnel.

The kit was formally launched for commercial use by the science and technology minister, Dr Jitendra Singh at New Delhi on October 28, 2014. Present on the occasion were Dr Mauro Giacca, director general, ICGEB Treste, Italy, Dr Vijay Raghavan, secretary, DBT and senior faculty of AIIMS, New Delhi. This launch comes close on the heels of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) launching a cost-effective injectable Polio vaccine, and ROTA virus vaccine about two months ago.

Terming the Indian profile of most of the diseases different from the rest of the world, Dr Jitendra Singh said that it requires exclusive management, partly because of the different Indian phenotype or genetic makeup and partly because of the tropical dimensions of the disease. This, he said, applies to a variety of diseases including autoimmune disorders like Celiac disease, Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus, Osteoporosis, and host of other associated disorders.

Globally, there has been an increase in the number of patients diagnosed with celiac disease. In celiac disease, the inner lining of the small intestine (where food is digested and absorbed) gets damaged and food is not absorbed properly. Non-absorption of food leads to weight loss, failure to gain weight, prolonged diarrhea, abdominal fullness, bulky stools, and anemia (lack of blood).