

Indian firms strengthen diagnostics segment

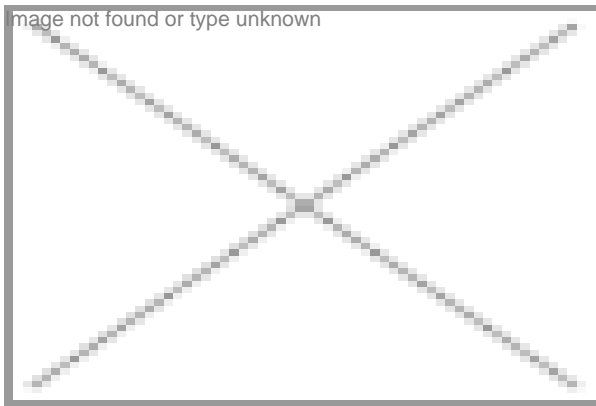
12 April 2011 | News

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Diagnostic kits are crucial for tracking and treating diseases. In this edition of CSO series, BioSpectrum highlights the achievements of Dr Shama Bhat, founder and chairman of Bhat Bio-Tech; and Dr Pradip Desai, founder and chairman of Span Diagnostics

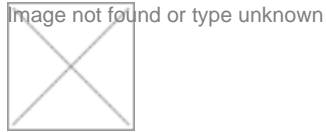
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Diagnosis is the first step in identifying the cause of any disease. Hence correct diagnosis is an obvious pre-requisite for planning any strategy for prevention, treatment or mitigation of diseases; increasing the effectiveness of treatment; and reducing the therapeutic turnaround time. Furthermore, diagnosis is also performed to reduce uncertainty related to

A fairly confident diagnosis can sometimes be made on the basis of clinical signs or symptoms alone, but accurate diagnosis usually requires a specific diagnostic test, often involving access to a diagnostic laboratory. Diagnostic tests have a key role in patient management and identifying most appropriate antibiotic to be used for treatment of infectious diseases. As compared to earlier times when the patients were

treated on the basis of clinical symptoms, today doctors are equipped with diagnostic results to find out the root cause of any disease. This also helps the doctor to track the disease progression and relapse.



Therefore, to offer cost-effective diagnostics solutions for people in resource-poor areas, developing and launching diagnostics for world's neglected diseases such as tuberculosis, syphilis, cholera, filaria, kala-azar, plague and malaria is a great responsibility.

The diagnostic companies in India have come a long way over the decades. There are a lot of indigenous companies that have made a significant difference in the diagnostic sector. Companies such as Bhat Bio-Tech, Span Diagnostics, Tulip Diagnostics and XCyton Diagnostics are the few prominent names in this space. The total number of clinical laboratories in India is said to be in between 38,000 and 40,000.

Companies such as Bhat Bio-Tech have developed innovative methods to cut down the cost by using indigenous reagents. For example, for making the HIV kits we need HIV antigens. HIV antigens imported from the US will cost about \$123 (5,500) per mg. To make the same antigen in-house, it will cost less than \$2.2 (100) per mg. When Bhat Bio-Tech started marketing pregnancy kits in 1996, it was priced at \$1.1 (50) per test to the distributors and now it is being sold at less than \$0.1 (7) per test.

Similarly, another example is of Span Diagnostics, which has been supplying the HIV test kits for National AIDS Control Program for the last eight years and malaria test kits for Malaria Control Program for the last five years.

However, it is also evident that in-vitro diagnostics (IVD) accounts for only three percent of overall healthcare spending.

[Dr. Shama Bhat](#)

[Dr Pradip K. Desai](#)