

Find out which medicine suits you, try genetic tests

Are you worried because a medicine prescribed by the doctor does not work for you? A biotech firm in Maharashtra is offering genetic tests that can determine which drugs can help you best, resulting in faster and more cost effective treatment.

Pune-based Acton Biotech is offering tests that may help determine which drug will work on a patient and which will not. It has started with cancer drugs because these drugs are very strong, have severe side effects and are expensive.

Sandeep Saxena, the Acton Biotech CEO, claims his firm is the first in India to offer such a facility though these tests are available all over the globe, especially in developed countries.

'We are offering four tests. One costs Rs.1,750, the dual tests together cost Rs.3,000 and yet another Rs.3,000,' Saxena told IANS on phone from Pune.

'We want all doctors and patients to know that genetic tests are now available in India and people can get their genetic profile tested before taking chemotherapy.

'We do a DNA extraction and then test the gene using a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or sequencing. It takes about one week to deliver the result and is given in the form of a report.'

'Genetic testing will soon be used for predicting baldness, obesity, cardiovascular problems and cancer. Insurance companies will use it to fix premiums, companies will use it before recruiting employees and families will use it before marriages.'

'We collect blood samples from all over India and send them via a courier service to our lab in Pune.'

Before launching the tests commercially - the last of them Thursday - the firm claimed that it conducted research on 200 patients and all of them have benefited. On studying the genetic profile, it was found that some people needed lower doses of a drug and others should not be exposed to it at all.

'These patients were given drugs based on their genetic profile and hence the drug was effective, safe and the treatment was faster,' he said.

'The first time we tested a patient was in June 2006,' said Saxena, who studied life sciences at St.Xaviers College, Mumbai, and learned molecular biology from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.

'Nowadays we do this test almost every day for some patient or the other from all over India. We have launched tests only for cancer patients right now. After about a year, we will move to drugs for other diseases,' he said.

'If we can get genetic information before giving a drug, we can help patients, their families and doctors by saving money and delivering faster cure.

'We are regularly challenged as some patients respond differently to drugs. Our mission is to

increase the effectiveness of a drug and reduce toxicity.'

Jatindra Dash (© IANS / India eNews)