

Low-cost Kits to Soothe Health Costs: Startup Bags ICMR's Technology

Licensing agreement to cover technologies for seven diseases

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Bengaluru: Noida-based Soothe Healthcare has acquired for an undisclosed amount the licence of a technology to manufacture and market a range of innovative rapid, portable and low-cost diagnostic kits developed by The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The licensing agreement covers technologies for seven diseases, including diabetes, oral and cervical cancer, Hepatitis E, and lung tuberculosis.

"Soothe's vision as a company is quality and affordable healthcare to masses. These diagnostic kits have retail synergies with our business at a channel. We want to get into businesses with mass market impact," said Sahil Dharia, managing director, Soothe Healthcare.

At the first stage, the company will bring out kits for diabetes and oncology, slated to be in the market in a year. It will pilot launch them in two cities that will be decided later.

The first product, a low-cost point of care device for the detection of diabetes, comprising a glucometer and strips, will be sold at pharmaceutical stores. The glucometer will be tentatively priced at ₹1,000-1,200, almost half the cost of those available in the market, while the strips (used to take blood sample) will cost ₹5, almost a fourth of those on shelves.

India has 60 million diabetic patients and 70 million more at pre-diabetes stage, as per a statement shared by ICMR. The global blood glucose monitoring devices market is expected to reach \$12.2 billion in 2017 with 46% of the 387 million people estimated to be living with diabetes remaining undiagnosed. The number of people with diabetes is expected to increase by another 205 million by 2035, it further said.

The oncology kit, a device for visualising the precancerous and cancerous lesions of uterine cervix and oral cavity will be a B2B product sold directly to doctors priced between ₹5,000-8,000. "This portable kit works

Affordable Shots

Co to bring out kits for diabetes and oncology in a year's time



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Co will pay ICMR royalty (a percentage of the revenues) on these kits for the next 20 years

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-Sahil Dharia,
MD, Soothe Healthcare

with a battery that gives it the flexibility to be used in villages anywhere in the world. More so, it does not need a doctor, even a nurse can diagnose you," Dharia said.

India reports the highest mortalities for cervical cancer in the world at 75,000 annually and an estimated 150,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year, as per ICMR's statement.

Soothe and its collaboration partner, the Indian Institute of Biotechnology (IIBT), are in the process to further upscale and develop these technologies to make them ready for commercialisation via validation, maturing, and independent field-testing as needed. The company will pay ICMR royalty (a percentage of the revenues) on these kits for the next 20 years.

ICMR spokesperson was unavailable to comment on the same.

In June last year, Soothe launched its first product Paree, an affordable range of sanitary napkins targeted at women aged between 14 and 30 years in the ₹1.5-5 lakh household income bracket.