

Saliva test to screen oral cancers in the offing

By Sunderarajan Padmanabhan

New Delhi, April 17 (India Science Wire): The war against oral cancer could soon get an additional weapon in its armoury – an affordable, non-invasive technique that could be deployed to screen for the disease in villages and remote locations without compromising on the sensitivity of the test.

The technique, pioneered by researchers at University of Turku in Finland, was further developed by Finnish firm, Aqsens Health Limited. The firm has now tied up with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) in Bengaluru to validate and bring it to market. The centre is a unit of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT). The project is supported by Finnish funding agency, Tekes, and DBT.



Signing in a tie up: Dept of Biotechnology's C-CAMP and Finnish firm, Aqsens agree to jointly develop a new method to screen oral cancer (Picture courtesy: DBT).

The new technique is based on the concept of liquid fingerprinting. Aqsens has developed a technology that has the potential to enable chemical profiling of saliva. This can help provide a multi-dimensional insight into a person's oral health. By comparing saliva from known early stage oral cancer sufferers and healthy individuals, the liquid fingerprinting method can be "taught" to distinguish between the two groups.

“The method has a promise to meet all critical elements of sensitivity, non-invasiveness, mobility and further it can be offered at affordable cost,” said Timo Teimonen ,Chairman of Aqsens Health.

Creating health infrastructure in remote areas is increasingly becoming an important area for national healthcare especially for countries with large populations. Having a cost-efficient and mobile method to screen oral cancer could have a significant impact. Cancers of the mouth, throat or neck account for about 40 per cent of all cancers in India. One of the major causes of such high prevalence is widespread practice of tobacco chewing. If diagnosed early, these cancers are treatable. But lack of awareness coupled with limited access to trained medical professionals and diagnostic facilities hamper early diagnosis. (India Science Wire)