

Pictor launches 5-in-1 infant testing kit in India

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Singapore: More than 300,000 babies die within the first 24 hours of being born in India every year, according to the latest State of the World's Mothers Report from Save The Children. An innovative new low cost ToRCH testing kit designed by New Zealand-based Pictor aims to help doctors prevent thousands of these deaths and assist in reducing India's infant mortality rate. Pictor has partnered with Indian firm Lilac Medicare, an in-vitro diagnostics company, for the distribution of ToRCH in India.

Dr Sarita and Mr Anand Kumble of Pictor have developed a test kit that provides a simple low cost testing platform for five of the major killers of infants, including Toxoplasma, Rubella, Cytomegalovirus and Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) 1 and 2. It is known as the ToRCH test (the name is an acronym for the five infectious diseases).

"The ToRCH infections are responsible for causing over 20 percent of deaths in new born infants in India and across South East Asia. These diseases also cause hearing impairment, eye problems, mental retardation, and autism. Traditional tests examining these pathogens have often been too expensive for many poorer families, leaving doctors to make their diagnosis based on symptoms alone," said Dr Kumble, founder, Pictor.

Used on expectant mothers, Pictor's test utilizes cutting-edge immunodiagnostic technology that allows up to eight tests to be accurately performed together on a specially designed microscope slide, using only a single drop of blood. Results are read on the company's low cost portable reader powered through a computer USB port, and analysed using Pictor's exclusive data analysis software which provides results within two minutes of test completion.

The test's easy integration into laboratories of all sizes, including the small manual operations still dominant in India and South East Asia, in addition to its low entry cost, fast results and minimum technical training requirements, make the technology ideal for developing countries.

New Zealand Consul General and Trade Commissioner in Mumbai, Mr Gavin Young, said that, "Pictor's ToRCH test is an exciting development offering real benefits for Indian families, where these diseases have caused loss and distress through long term health damage. The technology is yet another example of the innovative developments in the health sector coming

from New Zealand, more of which will be seen in India."