

Dengue fever testing strip being exported to Vietnam

Tohoku University startup TBA, with high accuracy

Tohoku University startup company TBA (Sendai city) is going to export genetic testing strip to Vietnam for infectious disease such as Dengue fever. Vietnam has many patients of Dengue fever, but commonly used rapid test has low accuracy, so that they will meet demand for high accuracy genetic testing. They expect JPY100million turnover for Vietnam after 5 years.

TBA developed and manufactures the testing strip, and is going to export it to Ho Chi Minh City medical company Mebiphar. Mebiphar will assemble it into diagnostic testing kit for sales to local clinics and facilities in Vietnam. Mebiphar is targeting product launch in August before Dengue fever epidemic season begins, after registration to Ministry of Health of Vietnam.

TBA's testing strip is small piece of paper with its length 6cm and width 2mm. Patient blood sample and dedicated reagent are used. Coloring dye binding to virus gene is detected, which brings judgement positive or negative. The results are obtained for one hour or so. This simple testing can be done at small and medium sized clinics.

TBA carried out the demonstration project in Vietnam supported by Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). Currently used rapid test called immuno-chromatography test showed its accuracy 54%, on the other hand, the genetic testing using TBA's testing strip showed its accuracy 95%.

So far the genetic testing have been able to be done at major hospitals only. So they expect large demand for the simple genetic testing with high accuracy. Several more infectious disease viruses can be detected such as Chikungunya and Zika, not only Dengue fever.

TBA has sold the testing strip so far to research institutions and so on. It was the first time to be practically used for patients.

They aim for the next step to realize export to other countries such as China, India and Indonesia in the future. Based on versatility of the testing strip, it can be used for various kinds of diseases such as tuberculosis and sexual transmitted diseases. Current annual turnover of TBA is around JPY50million, but they plan to grow overseas business in this 5 years to reach JPY1000million.