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# MedGenome Raises \$4M Series A for India DNA Database

Timothy Hay | June 04, 2014

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Medgenome Labs Private Ltd., a Bangalore-based startup that has been profitable since spinning out from an incubator program last year, has raised a first institutional funding round of \$4 million to bring DNA sequencing and big-data analysis to India, the company said.

Like Iceland, a country whose genetic homogeneity has given scientists a wealth of information about human DNA as it is passed down through generations, India is a sort of Holy Grail for research on the genetic origins of disease, said Dmitri Mehlhorn, an individual investor in the company.

The country also has ample medical needs that can be served by genetic analysis, he said.

The Series A round for Medgenome was led by Kartik Kumaramangalam on behalf of Papillon Capital and Mahesh Pratapneni on behalf of Emerge Venture, the company said, joined by Mr. Mehlhorn and other individual investors. Valuation was not disclosed.

News of the funding follows other recent deals involving startups that collect, analyze or present genetic information about disease.

Two weeks ago, Andreessen Horowitz and SV Angel joined other investors to provide SolveBio Inc. with a \$2 million funding round, [VentureWire records show](#). The company is attempting to build a vast database of DNA variants that researchers can use as a tool in diagnosing and treating disease.

About three weeks ago, Google Ventures provided the bulk of a \$130 million funding round for Flatiron Health Inc., which is building a DNA database and outfitting it to work with electronic medical records, according to [VentureWire records](#).

Medgenome sees both companies as potential partners, said Mr. Mehlhorn, an investor with angel network Vidinovo and a Medgenome board member. The field today is so large-and so much work remains to be done-that the market can support several leading companies, he said.

After raising grant money as a participant in Bangalore-based medical-technology incubator SciGenome, Medgenome last year spun out and began operating as the only laboratory in India that sequences DNA in-house, Mr. Mehlhorn said.

MedGenome has thus far analyzed the genomes of thousands of Indian people, and aims to increase that figure to tens of thousands by the end of the year and hundreds of thousands within two years. Within four years, the company should be sequencing the DNA of millions of people per year, Mr. Mehlhorn said.

The company offers not only laboratory services, but a still-growing database of DNA variations that will one day be of tremendous value to the scientific community, he said.

India, he said, "is like a thousand Icelands."

From the point of view of DNA researchers, Iceland is a gold mine, as its population is genetically homogenous. The homogeneity makes genetic variations and abnormalities easier to spot, as there are fewer X-factors to complicate the picture, Mr. Mehlhorn said.

India, with more than 6,000 different tribes, 3,000 different castes and thousands of ethnic groups, seems a far cry from Iceland.

But India's many groups, while very different from one another, are homogenous among themselves, Mr. Mehlhorn said.

With thousands of different genetically homogenous groups offering their DNA to Medgenome, the company hopes its database can one day offer scientists insights on genetics that have not been seen before, he said.

While the company is profitable, it raised its funding round to ramp up operations to build its database, Mr. Mehlhorn said.