

Device for quick detection of diseases now available

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AN American company, DxNA has manufactured a device that could ease detection of diseases, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.

The Polymerase Chain Reactor (PCR) detects the presence of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, West Nile fever and Avian influenza among other diseases in a blood sample, according to DxNA Vice President, Craig Mosman.

"It is the most accurate and sensitive laboratory in a box. It shrinks the most complex procedures that could happen in the most sophisticated laboratory," Mosman told the press at Sheraton Hotel in Kampala last week.

"The device can be operated by anyone, anywhere without prior training on how to use it."

The portable PCR machine, which can run on car battery among other power sources, gives results within 30 minutes compared close to four hours when the test is done by a conventional PCR.

To operate it, a blood sample is collected from a patient and placed in a barrel-a tube-like structure that is then inserted back into the PCR before a button on its front turns it on.

A ring in which the barrel is placed, directs sonic energy, which breaks the DNA (the genetic code of living organisms), according to Mosman.

It is at that point that parasites, viruses and other disease-causing agents of a given ailment are identified, Mosman said while demonstrating the process.

DxNA's PCR costs about \$12,000 (about sh23m) while a conventional PCR costs over \$40,000 (about sh76m) minus costs of support equipment and maintenance.

DxNA has signed contracts with Indonesian and Chinese authorities to supply hundreds of devices, Mosman disclosed.

Mosman is here on the invitation of Core Uganda and International Technology Networks both headquartered in Kampala.

Core Uganda boss, Cyril Boynes noted that disease was one of the reasons Uganda lags "behind economically."

A healthy community was important for national development, he said, adding that health should be a priority.

Core has been involved in various campaigns geared towards eradicating malaria. Last year, it organised a charity walk to Gulu, northern Uganda to raise awareness about Malaria.

Mosman and Boyne met a team from the health ministry and officials of the national drug authority. Health ministry officials could not comment.

But National Drug Authority boss, Apollo Muhairwe, told The New Vision that the gadget would be subjected to thorough tests.

"They have submitted to us documents but they have not been evaluated. Products should be tested for their safety," he stated, adding that the process would be done between three to six months.

Centres of excellence and experts would assess the machine and the submitted literature before it can be given a green light, he added.



Boynes and Mosman addressing journalists at Sheraton Hotel last week

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