



“The number of people requiring dialysis in the future is going to break most healthcare systems - Richard Lipscombe

ADOPTION: Richard Lipscombe expects the recently commercialised testing kit to be in high demand. Photo: Gabriel Oliveira

Proteomics kit fit for market

It has taken over 15 years, but Perth-based medical technology company Proteomics International is now launching a commercial product targeted at the US.

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A TEST kit for diabetic kidney disease developed by local firm Proteomics International Laboratories is ready for market, with the product for general pathology labs now being shipped.

Managing director Richard Lipscombe told *Business News* the company had been primarily focused on the commercialisation of the diabetic kidney disease test kit for the past six months, after working to perfect the technology since 2001.

“We started working on this project several years ago here in WA with the medical school out of the University of Western Australia,” he said.

“The objective then was to come up with a better test in the area of diabetes complications.

“The reason we’re doing it is because diabetes itself is an umbrella disease – diabetes won’t kill you, but the complications will, and kidney disease is one of the major ones.”

The PromarkerD can identify individuals prone to get kidney disease in three or four years, based on a fingerprint of proteins in the blood.

This can enable people to understand their risk well before symptoms begin to show.

“The kidney is a very tolerant organ,” Dr Lipscombe said.

“Your kidney function could drop to about 20 per cent and you wouldn’t know, you’d still think it’s fine.

“At 15 per cent you might feel a bit lethargic, but at 10 per cent you’re on dialysis.”

The company was initially self-funded by its analytical services arm, which tests and validates the protein composition of a wide range of products.

After receiving a government grant in 2010, and listing on the ASX in 2015, the company now has around \$1.2 million in service revenue.

Following the creation of a diagnostic test platform, which has been trialled internationally, Proteomics is now in the process of shipping its kit version of the test, which Dr Lipscombe described as more usable for general pathology labs.

The kit began shipping to Proteomics’ approved trial market in the Dominican Republic last week.

Proteomics has focused primarily on the US market, as well as Mexico and Spain, recently announcing its collaboration with US pharmaceutical company Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.

The Perth-based company will allow Janssen to more accurately test a potential treatment for diabetic kidney disease and better understand the performance of drugs by identifying high-risk patients.

“The deal with them [Janssen] is to look for how we can better treat people with diabetes,” Dr Lipscombe said.

“We have a diagnostic test we can use to predict who’s going to get disease, that’s the primary aim.

“The follow-up question to that would be, what benefit is there of telling people they’re going to get sick if you can’t do anything about it?”

With at least 18 drugs to treat kidney disease currently being tested by a range of companies, Dr Lipscombe said it was only a matter of time until a trial was successful.

Proteomics also has a relationship with local company Dimerix, similarly streamlining the testing of a drug for kidney disease.

“It’s nice to see a company like Dimerix competing against the big companies,” Dr Lipscombe said.

The next major goal for Proteomics will be to expand into markets such as China and India, with Dr Lipscombe identifying the next six months as a time to grow target markets and generate more interest in the test.

“We think there will be demand from the government and insurance companies who simply say, ‘we cannot afford to treat the amount of dialysis we’ll get if we don’t do anything,’” he said.

“The number of people requiring dialysis in the future is going to break most healthcare systems.”

Dr Lipscombe said he hoped the cost-effective PromarkerD would soon become a common fixture in the medical community, allowing doctors to more accurately prescribe lifestyle adjustments to at-risk patients.

“We think the adoption will be very high, and we look forward to the day when people go for a check-up and have blood sugar and fat tests, PromarkerD is sitting beside that as well,” he said.

Dr Lipscombe said Proteomics was now initiating research into other diseases such as endometriosis.

“We’re looking for other areas as well, we have other tests in our pipeline,” he said.

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