Philadelphia biotech firm teams up with CDC to battle Zika

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Group K Diagnostic's co-founder and CEO Brianna Wronko at the entrance to the company's new headquarters

Group K Diagnostics signed an agreement Tuesday with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to design and evaluate a diagnostic test that can be used to detect Zika.

The Philadelphia biotechnology company said the test will be able to be performed by clinical personnel in resource-limited areas where real-time testing is not available.

Zika is a virus spread primarily by mosquitoes. The virus causes mild symptoms — such as fever, rashes and joint pain— in most adults who contract it, but it can cause serious health problems for pregnant women and their babies. The Zika virus has emerged as a major global public health concern in the last three years.

Financial terms of the agreement between the CDC and Group K Diagnostics were not disclosed. The goal of the partnership is to create a point-of-care diagnostic that could greatly expedite the testing and diagnosis process for health professionals in both suburban and remote geographic regions, and allow care providers to update patient care plans and implement infection control procedures at the primary visit.

Group K Diagnostic's lead product candidate is the MultiNostic Test Kit, a microfluidic point-of-care device being designed to deliver results in 20 minutes for more than 60 blood tests. A liver function test developed by the company is under review by Food and Drug Administration.

“As our diagnostic solution, the MultiNostic Test Kit, continues to advance through clinical trials and FDA submissions, we’re more confident than ever that this collaboration will yield a technology that will change the existing testing processes for and frequency of ZIKV testing in both major metropolitan areas and resource-limited regions of the world,” said Brianna Wronko, founder and CEO of Group K Diagnostics. “The raw materials and scalable manufacturing process we employ enable a very low cost product, making our solution an ideal choice for the CDC research collaboration, and ultimately a catalyst for the evolution of infectious disease diagnostic testing at-large.”

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