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Startup comes up with radiation-free device to detect cancerous lymph nodes

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Bengaluru: Many breast cancer survivors say their hands swell a couple of years after surgery and they even find it tough to raise their arms due to removal of lymph nodes in their armpits to make sure the cancer doesn't spread.

Doctors had been removing lymph nodes as there was no affordable technique to detect when they turn cancerous. However, the removal of good lymph nodes as a preventive tactic will now be a thing of the past as a city-based medical technology startup, Irillic, has come up with a hand-held device — Irillic .nm Fluorescence Imaging System—to detect cancerous growth of lymph nodes.

The infra-red device can scan body parts within a few seconds of injection of a benign contrast dye called Indo-Cyanine Green (ICG). It can detect any abnormal growth

COSTS LESS THAN ₹10K PER TEST

The technology is being used by leading surgeons at two hospitals in Bengaluru and costs less than Rs 10,000 per test. The machine has just entered the market, but is being used in hospitals as part of a trial run. It has been used on over 280 patients by doctors with whom the firm has a clinical evaluation agreement. "We're



in a lymph node, which is otherwise untraceable. There is no nuclear isotope injected while using the device to detect abnormal growth.

While a similar devices made in the US and Japan is already in the market, the Indian version comes with affordability, better image quality and ease of use. "We aimed to produce a cancer-care product free of nuclear radiation," sa-

in the process of obtaining a patent," added Vijaya.

The indigenous innovation has been lauded by the Association of Breast Surgeons of India. Dr SP Somashekar, president of the association, and chairman-HoD of oncology at Manipal Hospitals, said less than 5% of Indian breast cancer patients undergo tests to detect sentinel lymph nodes.

id BD Vijaya, CEO of the JP Nagar-based Irillic. It took three years to come out with a completely indigenously developed imaging device used in cancer and other surgeries. The radiation-free device is the brainchild of two alumni of National Institute of Technology, Surathkal — Navaneeth Mohanan and Saish Kamat — co-founders of Irillic.

ICG fluorescence lymph

ography can detect lymphedema at the earliest without using nuclear radiation. The only device, which can detect cancerous lymph nodes and is currently available in the market, uses radiation and requires permission from Atomic Energy Regulatory Board. This has resulted in the device not penetrating into rural centres. Also, it can't give spatial dimensions of the abnormal growth.

"The radiation device and its consumables are expensive, costing no less than Rs 30,000 per use. Of the 350-400 cancer hospitals in India, not more than 40 have it. In the absence of an affordable detection tool to zero in on the sentinel lymph node that may or may not have been affected by cancer, surgeons used to remove the nodes among breast cancer survivors. Irillic device can be used by surgeons in rural areas with minimal infrastructure for cancer detection," said Vijaya.