



PRESS RELEASE
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Parsi communities in Hyderabad, Navsari and Surat provide participative support to The AVESTAGENOME Project™. Avesthagen team to visit Baroda and Ahmedabad in first week of March. Mumbai phase expected to begin in April.

Bangalore, February 13, 2008: Avesthagen Limited, a knowledge-based Life Sciences Company, has successfully initiated the first phase of The AVESTAGENOME Project™, undertaking blood sample collection of the Parsi population in Hyderabad, Navsari and Surat. This large-scale genomic project aims to study the basis of longevity that is noticed in the Parsi-Zoroastrian population, and also to create a medical database of the community.

The AVESTAGENOME Project™ is the brainchild of Dr. Viloo Morawala - Patell, Founder Chairperson and Managing Director of the bangalore-based Avesthagen Limited. This project is a scientific endeavour that is designed to benefit the entire human race. The results of the research will identify the genetic basis of longevity and for various diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinsons etc. The study will also enable the development of new therapies and drug targets.

After completing the blood sample collection from parsi donors at Hyderabad and at Navsari, the Avesthagen team has started the project at Surat from the 10th February at the Parsi General Hospital. The Surat Parsi Panchayat is lending full support and assistance under the able guidance of its President Mr. Darayas Master. The Trustees, Secretary, Committee members and staff are providing tremendous assistance and encouragement towards the success of this project.

The Avesthagen team from Bangalore comprising Doctors, Scientists and Bioinformaticians have set up a center for the collection and processing of the blood samples from the donors. They are being assisted by volunteers from the parsi community in Surat who are mobilizing members of the community for this worthy cause. The response from the community has been very positive as is evident by the large turnout of donors to date.

On completion of the sample collection drive (433 samples) in the twin cities of Hyderabad-Secunderabad in December 2007, Mrs. Gulbanoo Y. Chenoy, President PZASH in a note to Dr. Patell observed "On behalf of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad and the parsis of the twin cities, I would like to convey our appreciation of your pioneering work through the Avesthagenome Project. Your deep sense of commitment towards improving the quality of life is reflected by this humane and philanthropic project, which is indeed a matter of great pride for us .We wish you and the Avesthagenome Project all the very best. May the blessings of Ahura Mazda be upon you and your company.

Following Hyderabad, the Avesthagen team was in Navsari, from January 6 to13, 2008. The response from the Parsi population of Navsari was most encouraging, and 686 samples were collected. The seriousness of purpose and the professionalism of the AVESTAGENOME team won over the initial scepticism of the Navsari Parsis, and encouraged by Dara Kaikhushru Deboo, an advocate by profession, and a trustee on the boards of several Parsi social, educational and charitable institutions of Navsari, the donors poured in all day enthusiastically to participate in this study. The Parsi youth of Navsari, under the able leadership of Freddy Minoo Kassad, with immense enthusiasm, resourcefulness and energy, facilitated the entire sample collection drive to its successful completion.

Navsari Parsis have by and large held on to the exclusivity of their customs, traditions and religious rites. Senior citizens of the community, overcoming their physical difficulties came along with great pride to demonstrate their solidarity with the study. The youth and middle-aged members of the community did not lag behind in their enthusiasm either. According to the octogenarian Mehru, wife of Ervad Ruttonji Seervai, and granddaughter of the famed Parsi scholar Sir Jeevanji Mody, "Every Parsi must come forward and be a part of this scientific study, which is the first of its kind that I have known of, because this will open up new avenues of knowledge and help not only in the alleviation of the medical problems that rack the community members, but of the human race as well."

For 87-year-old Hillamai Edulji Antia, wife of the late Mobedji of the Navsari Atash Behram, "It is a sacred duty to help in such a study. When such highly qualified scientists and experts drawn from different communities are taking such a keen interest in studying our Parsi genetic make-up, and have come all the way from Bangalore to Navsari, what does the little physical discomfort that I have to undergo in coming to the venue matter?"

About Avesthagen Limited

Avesthagen Limited is India's leading integrated systems biology platform company that focuses on achieving convergence of food, pharma and population genetics leading to predictive preventive and personalized healthcare. It employs 600 people worldwide and is headquartered in Bangalore. Avesthagen Limited has established world class, state-of-the-art laboratory facilities in Bangalore. It began business operations in 2001. Since its inception Avesthagen has grown into one of India's leading healthcare technology groups, and its activities include, in addition to its agri-biotechnologies product pipeline, development of clinically validated botanical bioactives, derived from Indian medicinal plants, as well as the development of a pipeline of bio-similar drugs. Avesthagen Limited has four strategic business units: bioPharmaceuticals, bioNutrition, bioAgriculture and Science & Innovation. Its partners include multiple top-10 global companies in each of its fields of research. Avesthagen Limited collaborates at every stage in the value chain with appropriate partners, both public and private, for access to and exchange of technology and overall commercial expertise to leverage the 'India advantage'.

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