



PUNENewsline

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SKYWATCH

FORECAST: Few spells of rain in parts of the city

TEMPERATURE:

MAXIMUM 28 °C

MINIMUM 22 °C

SUNRISE: 0602

SUNSET: 1916

MOONRISE: 1946

MOONSET: 0557

What is the secret behind the Parsi-Zoroastrians' longevity?

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS

JULY 3

BANGALORE-BASED biotech company Avesthagen Ltd, which is carrying out a large-scale study to decipher the riddle behind the Parsi-Zoroastrians' longevity, has launched a Pune chapter and has appealed to members of the community to provide blood samples in large numbers. The reason the Parsis have been selected for the research is that they are a largely homogeneous community with a

high degree of intra-community marriages. This would make it easier to identify any particular gene linked to the longevity.

The project will require blood samples across ages — from an eight-year-old to an octogenarian. Ruby Hall Clinic CEO Bhomi Bhote said that the hospital is one of the centres where members from the Parsi-Zoroastrian community can provide blood samples. So far we have received 200 samples, he said.

The Avestagenome project is a large-scale study undertaken in the country that also aims at probing the increased incidence of diseases like cancer, diabetes and heart related ailments, officials from Avesthagen Ltd told *The Indian Express*. It will also aid in developing drugs and diagnostics.

According to Avesthagen founder and managing director Villoo Morawala Patell, the project is biotechnology-driven and will aim to come up with therapies

Bangalore-based biotech company trying to solve riddle opens Pune chapter, seeks blood samples

The project results will find application in disease prediction and accelerate the development of new therapies and diagnostics

Villoo Morawala Patell,
Avesthagen
Founder & MD

and diagnostic tools to understand linkages between genes, diseases and environmental factors.

"The comprehensive database arising out of the project will provide invaluable information on these linkages for all of humanity and not just for the Parsi community. The project results will find application in disease prediction and accelerate the development of new therapies and diagnostics," she said in an official statement.

Parsi Zoroastrians, who number about 69,000 in India, are an in-bred population resulting from the discouragement of inter-community marriages. Such in-bred populations are helpful in pinpointing inherited genes linked to diseases. According to Bhote, there are approximately 5,000-6000 Parsis in Pune city. "The aim is to collect blood samples from at least 2,000 of them," said Bhote.

The drive to enrol Parsis in the

project is underway at Pundamjee hall, Khorshed Wadi and the Ruby Hall Clinic blood bank till July 10. Details may be obtained by contacting Perviz Bhote at 9884206151.

N Mistry, Director of the Pune-based Foundation for Research in Community Health, said that there is a possibility of an overlap with genes from West Asia and since the Parsi community is a homogeneous one, the gene pool remains static and would be easier to track any gene related to longevity.