

Illumina, Merck collaborate in cancer diagnostics

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Illumina has announced its collaboration with Merck to develop a universal next-generation sequencing (NGS)-based oncology diagnostic. Both the companies will work to create a universal test system for clinical trials of targeted cancer therapies, with the goal of a more comprehensive tool for precision medicine.

Illumina is working with Merck Serono to develop assays that detect and measure multiple variants simultaneously to support clinical trials. The collaboration toward the universal cancer test will include test development, worldwide regulatory approvals, and global commercialization. In parallel, Illumina continues to collaborate with the key thought leaders of the Actionable Genome Consortium to set standards for NGS-based assays in routine clinical oncology practice, as well as to define regulatory frameworks to enable this new testing paradigm.

"Our collaboration with Illumina around next-generation sequencing will enable us to perform genome studies at a pace unheard of a few years ago, and could lead to the development of several diagnostics," said Ms Susan Herbert, head of global business development at Merck. She added, "This collaboration will strengthen the position of Merck Serono as a global leader in precision medicine in oncology."

"This agreement is another step forward in realizing the promise of precision medicine," said Dr Richard Klausner, Illumina's chief medical officer. He added, "The US government's Precision Medicine Initiative, recently announced by President Obama, specifically outlines the need to expand genetically-based clinical trials as a key approach for developing better treatments for cancer. We are very excited to work with Merck Serono on this endeavor."