

IMMUNO-MYCOLOGICS INC. (IMMY)

Just as important as the medications that treat diseases are the tests to help pinpoint the correct diagnosis to connect the sick patient with the proper drugs. That's where Oklahoma-based Immuno-Mycologics Inc. (IMMY) excels. IMMY manufactures diagnostic tests and sells them to hospitals and clinics throughout the world. Their goal is simple – save lives.

Every year, there are more than one million cases of cryptococcosis which causes fungal meningitis. To contract the deadly disease, an individual's immune system must be compromised. Primarily, it causes disease in AIDS patients, many of whom are in sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia. Pfizer donates the drug to treat this disease. The only thing missing was a test to diagnose the disease in these patients. Existing diagnostic tests are easy to administer, but because they require water and refrigeration, there was no effective way to perform the tests in developing countries where access to electricity and clean water is a challenge. So IMMY developed a test that met the World Health Organization's A.S.S.U.R.E.D. criteria – affordable, sensitive, specific, user-friendly, reliable, equipment-free and could be delivered to the people who need it most. Everything is contained within the test. It's based on the same technology as a home pregnancy test where two lines mean positive, one means negative.



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates the test developed by IMMY can save between 50,000 and 100,000 lives annually. By keeping mothers alive who would have died from this disease, the IMMY diagnostic test can prevent somewhere between 300,000 and 600,000 orphans. In September, the South African government began to roll out national screening using this test.

With the support of OCAST, IMMY is developing a similar test that will treat histoplasmosis, a disease that has a similar impact in Latin America and South America. Both of these tests are the only ones of their kind in the world and will ultimately save millions of lives. IMMY has developed and manufactures more than 60 diagnostic tests in Oklahoma.

Also with the support of OCAST, IMMY has hired highly skilled interns. Brian Doherty, a former biotechnology student at Oklahoma City Community College, was one of the OCAST supported interns. Now, Doherty is the project manager for the cryptococcosis test.

During Doherty's internship, he participated in the very early "dream" phase of the cryptococcosis test he has now seen come to fruition. Other research discoveries he made while interning were recently requested by the Mayo Clinic.

"Internships are so vital for students going into a scientific field," said Doherty. "My internship exposed me to things I would have never seen in school. You have hands-on access to the equipment and tools you will be using in the real world. It also helped solidify my area of focus and allowed me to network with professionals in my field."

[Go to the IMMY website](#)