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Enzolve launches PKU screening test

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An Irish company was due to launch a novel newborn screening test for phenylketonuria (PKU) at a major international meeting in Prague this week. Based at the innovation and technology transfer centre NovaUCD, Enzolve Technologies was due to formally launch its diagnostic test at the 6th International Society for Neonatal Screening European Regional Meeting, which took place in Prague from April 26–28. Enzolve was co-founded by Prof Paul C. Engel and Dr Suren Aghajanian as a spin-out from UCD's School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science.

PKU, an inherited metabolic disorder, can result in severe mental retardation if treatment is not started within the first few weeks of life. If the disorder is detected early, and with a well-maintained appropriate diet, affected children can have normal development and lifespan.

While most developed countries have programmes to screen newborns for this disorder, only between 30-35 per cent of babies worldwide undergo such screening. This PKU test is the first in a suite of products, called NeoScreenPak, which Enzolve is developing to screen for a variety of metabolic disorders in babies.

The tests are simpler, faster, more reliable, convenient and cost-effective than those currently available on the market, according to its developers.

Speaking in advance of the launch, Prof Philip Mayne, Director of the National Newborn Screening Laboratory at the Children's University Hospital, Dublin, said this was a 'significant advance for Enzolve and has potential for newborn screening around the world'.

"The product is very suitable for countries that cannot invest in advanced screening equipment, allowing these countries to implement national screening programmes for PKU," he stated.

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