

Life Tech, Illumina unveil one-day genomes

January 10 2012, By Val Brickates Kennedy

Life Technologies Corp. and Illumina Inc. unveiled rival genetic-sequencing machines Tuesday that both say can map a person's genome in a single day.

Shares of Life Technologies were up 8 percent Tuesday, while shares of Illumina had risen 3 percent.

The machines could be a significant breakthrough for researchers, helping scientists keep down costs by speeding up the mapping process. According to analysts at Mizuho Securities, most genomic sequencing takes about two weeks and costs from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per genome.

A key difference between the Life Technologies and Illumina machines appears to be the up-front costs.

Life Technologies' machine, called the Ion Proton Sequencer, will sell for about \$149,000. The company said it will be able to map a genome for as little as \$1,000 within 24 hours. The machine uses Life Tech's Ion Torrent technology.

A version of the Ion Proton Sequencer for mapping protein-encoding areas of the genome known as exomes is to be available at midyear. The company hopes to have a version capable of sequencing an entire genome on the market about six months later.

In a statement, Life Technologies emphasized the machine is to be used for research purposes only and is not for diagnostic or therapeutic use.

Meanwhile, Illumina said its machine, the HiSeq 2500, will cost around \$740,000. The device will also be available as a \$50,000 upgrade to its existing HiSeq 2000 sequencing system, and will ship during the second half of the year.

Despite HiSeq's higher cost, Illumina has the advantage of being the market leader, and its systems are highly regarded for accuracy and sophistication.

An Illumina spokeswoman said Tuesday that the company had not yet disclosed how much it would cost to map a genome through the HiSeq 2500. But according to Mizuho Securities analyst Peter Lawson, the machine would put a \$1,000 [genome](#) "within reach."

"Life's Ion Torrent boxes appear to be more cutting-edge, with plenty of upside for throughput and volume but more experimental, while Illumina's boxes that generate around 90 percent of the data are still for those that want to get the job done - and will continue to command the attention of the high-volume labs," Lawson wrote in an email to MarketWatch.

"Illumina still retains their competitive advantage, combining pure horsepower with innovation. Life's are pure innovation machines," he added.

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