

## PRESS RELEASE

### Going together to go far – DBT-THSTI partners with NCR Hospitals for DBT's COVID-19 program and NCR Biotech Science Cluster Biorepository



***What are the patterns of antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 infection?***

***Are the immune responses different between individuals who were asymptomatic and symptomatic?***

***Are there specific markers by which we can determine whether an individual is protected from further infection?***

These are some of the crucial questions that DBT's COVID-19 research consortium will provide answers to. The consortium's work will help us to understand COVID-19 better and help us to overcome this pandemic challenges.

One of the essential tools in the fight against the new Coronavirus Disease is the availability of diagnostic tests to identify infected individuals. Development and evaluation of diagnostic tools, understanding whether and how much past infection and immunization can protect individuals from future infections are crucial in this long drawn fight against this pandemic.

Autonomous institutes under DBT and multiple public and private hospitals in Delhi National Capital Region have set up a DBT-India COVID-19 Research Consortium. Faridabad-based Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) is the coordinator of the consortium. THSTI has partnered with Maulana Azad Medical College, Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi, and ESI Medical College Hospital, Faridabad, who enroll most of the participants. Our other clinical partners are Civil Hospital, Gurugram, Haryana; Civil Hospital, Palwal, Haryana; Al-Falah School of Medical Science & Research Centre and Hospital, Dhauj, Haryana; Medanta Hospital, Gurugram; Shaheed Hasan Khan Mewati Government Medical College, Nalhar, Haryana; SGT Medical College, Gurugram, Haryana; and Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi. The research institutions in this consortium are THSTI, Faridabad, National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi, and International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, New Delhi, and Regional Centre for Biotechnology.

To date, the consortium has enrolled more than 3000 COVID19 positive patients and is following them into their recovery period and collecting valuable clinical information and blood samples at different periods. The samples are processed and stored in a state-of-the-art biorepository at THSTI as per the global and national guidelines. The consortium has aided the development of an antibody test (designed to check if an individual was infected before) and a novel antigen test (to detect the presence of the virus in the throat). Both the tests have been transferred to industry for commercialization. The biorepository currently has nearly ~60,000 aliquots of biospecimens collected at different time points of the disease (active and recovery period). Guidelines and a structured process are in place for access to samples in a fast track mode through an empowered Access Control Committee. Biospecimens have been and are being distributed to the academic institutions and industry to accelerate the innovations in COVID19 diagnostics and immunity research.