



HEALTHCARE MAY 23, 2020 / 5:00 PM / UPDATED 9 MONTHS AGO

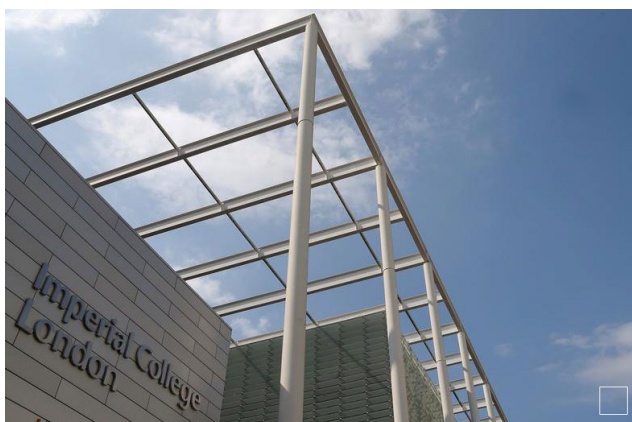
One-hour COVID-19 test being trialed at hospitals around London

By Guy Faulconbridge

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LONDON (Reuters) - A COVID-19 test that gives results in just over an hour and which requires no laboratory, potentially allowing for swifter testing of much larger numbers of people, is being rolled out at a number of London hospitals after getting regulatory clearance.

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FILE PHOTO: A faculty building of Imperial College is seen in London, May 27, 2016. REUTERS/Toby Melville/File Photo

As Britain tries to ramp up testing to help revive the stalled economy, it is still mainly using laboratory tests that take around 48 hours to produce a result and either require people to travel often long distances to regional testing centers or receive by post at home.

Faster testing could allow more people to go back to work or permit testing on a more regular basis and could help Prime Minister Boris Johnson achieve his target of 200,000 tests a day, an important element in successfully ending the lockdown.

The new test, based on the design of a DNA test developed by a professor at Imperial College London, received approval for clinical use by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) at the end of April after successful trials.

With a sensitivity of over 98% and specificity of 100%, the DnaNudge test is being rolled out in cancer wards, accident and emergency, and maternity departments, as a prelude to possible wider application.

The health ministry said it was a pilot scheme and that other lab-based tests were also

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being run in order to look at the benefits and capabilities of each test. Britain's National Health Service is also using other point-of-care machines to test for the virus.

Britain made an initial order of 10,000 DnaNudge cartridges in March and has procured another 70,000 since. The price of the disposable cartridge tests is around 40 pounds (\$49).

"It is a lab in a cartridge effectively," said Chris Toumazou, a professor of engineering at Imperial College who developed the test. "The key is that with this test you go straight from a saliva swap or a nasal swab into the cartridge with no transport and no laboratory."

"You can even look at such small fragments of the RNA (Ribonucleic acid) that you can check whether a patient is coming out of it or going into COVID," Toumazou said.

The test, which requires one nostril swab, is being rolled out at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, West Middlesex University Hospital, St Mary's, and at Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital.

"This test does work and is actually more sensitive than some of the lab tests," Dr Gary Davies, hospital medical director at the Chelsea and Westminster, told Reuters. He said the test was being used for patients coming into hospital to help decide on which ward to place them.

(\$1 = 0.8217 pounds)

Reporting by Guy Faulconbridge; Editing by David Holmes

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