First COVID-19 PCR Test Kit Authorised for Pandemic Use by the CARPHA-CRS

Following a rigorous review process, the LabGun COVID-19 RT-PCR Kit developed by LabGenomics Co. Ltd, has been recommended for use since July 20, 2020. The real-time polymerase chain reaction test kit is authorised for use on respiratory samples only and is recommended for use only during the pandemic period, by authorised agencies and/or laboratory personnel. In CARPHA’s Laboratory Update #16 it is noted that the kit has a sensitivity and specificity > 95%.

The LabGun® COVID-19 RT-PCR Kit is compatible with the following PCR platforms:
- Applied Biosystems™ 7500 Real-time PCR Instrument system with software version 2.3 (Thermo Fisher).
- FX96™ Real-time PCR detection system with Bio-Rad CFX Manager 3.1 (Bio-Rad).

Member States are advised to utilize the CARPHA Guidance for the Evaluation and Selection of Diagnostic Tests for the COVID-19 Response to see whether this kit meets your national requirements.

Visit the CARPHA website for more on COVID-19 in the Caribbean
https://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus
Global Health Security Agenda Action Package Prevent-3 (GHSA APP3) Statement on Biosafety and Biosecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As a member of the APP3 Working Group, CARPHA contributed to the statement which “maintains that upholding robust biosafety and biosecurity systems and practices remains a critical priority for the global community, especially in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety and security should be key considerations as countries rapidly bolster their laboratory and disease surveillance surge capacities to combat COVID-19. In the absence of sufficient biosafety and biosecurity, there remains an increased risk of accidental or deliberate infections and releases of SARS-CoV-2.”

The Statement released today, July 30, 2020 provides three recommendations for responding to the current threat and preparing for future health emergencies -

- **Support of multisectoral initiatives for developing system-wide biosecurity guidance including recommendations on appropriate sample destruction to avoid “orphaned” samples spread across multiple potentially unsafe and unsecure facilities and locations.**

- **Encourage countries and regional organizations to develop standardized screening guidance that would detail how, where, and under what conditions pathogens (or component parts thereof) can be safely and securely synthesized to support accelerated research on medical countermeasures and detection tools for COVID-19 and other global public health emergencies.**

- **Support national, regional, and global efforts to protect against potential information hazards in scientific publications that could enable the misuse of information.**

Click for the full statement.
NEW! Updated PAHO/WHO Laboratory Guidance

In an updated document dated July 8, 2020, more extensive information is provided on the various laboratory diagnostic protocols such as molecular detection, antigen detection, serological methods and includes testing algorithms and the dynamics of COVID-19 infection as seen below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. PAHO/WHO Dynamics of COVID-19 Infection (based on currently available data), PAHO, 2020](https://www.paho.org/en/documents/laboratory-guidelines-detection-and-diagnosis-covid-19-virus-infection)


HIV Testing and COVID-19

PANCAP recently released an animated video which summarizes the safety protocols for conducting HIV testing safely during COVID-19. Click this link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoALLaUGrl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoALLaUGrl) to view the video and share with others.
**Webinars and Online Courses**

**CDC**
- Biothreat Rule Out or Refer: Virtual Knowledge Exercise 1 and 2

**Description:** These virtual exercises which provide an opportunity for microbiologists to participate in virtual case studies using American Society for Microbiology (ASM) sentinel laboratory protocols to detect potential biothreat agents, while in a safe environment.

Exercise 1: [https://cdc.train.org/cdctrain/course/1091527](https://cdc.train.org/cdctrain/course/1091527)
Exercise 2: [https://cdc.train.org/cdctrain/course/1091528](https://cdc.train.org/cdctrain/course/1091528)

**CPHLN**
- Sample Pooling Webinar

**Description:** The Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network recently held a webinar on how specimen pooling could be used to assist laboratories to provide a timely public health response. YouTube link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovmwSvQFHFQ&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovmwSvQFHFQ&feature=youtu.be)

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**COVID-19 Resources**

**Laboratory testing:**
- Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
- United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FINDD)
- World Health Organization (WHO)

**Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity guidelines:**
- United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- Canada/Public Health Canada (PHAC)
- International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA)
- World Health Organization (WHO) UPDATED

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