

Government invests in UK-developed antibody tests from UK Rapid Test Consortium

- Government has purchased 1 million antibody tests from the UK-RTC
- The British-made antibody testing kits will support nationwide surveillance studies to track the spread of COVID-19 in the population

The government has signed a deal with the UK-RTC for 1 million antibody tests, Health Minister Lord Bethell has announced today.

The home antibody tests will be rolled out as part of the government's COVID-19 surveillance studies to help build a picture of how the virus has spread across the country and further develop our understanding of how antibodies work.

The test uses a finger-prick device and provides a result within 20 minutes, without the need to be sent to a lab for analysis and therefore has no impact on testing lab capacity.

The tests have been produced and manufactured by British diagnostics companies including Abingdon Health, BBI Group Holding Limited, CIGA Healthcare Limited, and Omega Diagnostics Limited in the UK Rapid Test Consortium set up at the start of the pandemic – and demonstrate how, supported by government investment, the UK diagnostics industry is leading on the global stage in our efforts to tackle COVID-19.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

Home testing is a powerful tool in understanding the disease and fighting its spread. So we are thrilled by the RTC product, both for Britain and export markets around the world.

Chris Yates, CEO of Abingdon Health, who led the UK-RTC, said:

The UK government order of the first one million tests is an endorsement of this UK-designed, developed and manufactured high-quality rapid diagnostic test. It is a triumph of British business and a breakthrough for UK life sciences.

We have ramped up production since the start of August and will be ready to deliver the first tests to the government by early October. I would like to express my thanks to all my Abingdon Health colleagues for their tremendous support and hard work in achieving this milestone.

Testing positive for antibodies does not mean you are immune to COVID-19. Currently, there is no firm evidence that the presence of antibodies means someone cannot be re-infected with the virus and it is vital individuals continue to follow national guidelines including social distancing measures, getting a swab test if they have symptoms and wearing face coverings where required.

The antibody test has been evaluated by Public Health England (PHE) and this evaluation will be published in due course.

The UK-RTC was set up by Abingdon Health to bring together scientists and medical technology manufacturers to be able to deliver millions of test kits as quickly as possible.

By working together, some of the UK's leading medical technology companies will deliver more volume more quickly to help fight COVID-19.