

DBT-BIRAC Call on COVID-19 Research Consortium

The DBT and BIRAC has given a call on COVID-19 Research Consortium and the first phase of the call ended on 30th March 2020. The multi-tiered review process is ongoing and up till now 16 proposals have been recommended for funding support after stringent evaluation. These include proposals on devices, diagnostics, vaccine candidates, therapeutics and other interventions.



The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and its public sector undertaking Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have been relentlessly working to collaborate across the healthcare innovation ecosystem ranging from biotech companies to entrepreneurs coming up with innovations to academic institutions to address the COVID-19 global health care crisis.

Funding support has been recommended under the National Biopharma Mission to Cadila Healthcare Ltd (DNA Vaccine candidate), Bharat Biotech International Ltd (vaccine candidate utilizing the inactivated rabies vector platform) and to Serum Institute of India Private Limited (SIIPL) for a Phase III human clinical trials study of recombinant BCG vaccine (VPM1002). Additionally, the

National Institute of Immunology would be funded for development of a novel vaccine evaluation platform for SARS-CoV-2. A plasma therapy-based study at Virchow Biotech Pvt Ltd would also be supported under this consortium. Financial support to OncoSeek Bio Pvt Ltd will be provided to create an *in vitro* Lung Organoid model.

Mylab Discovery Solutions Pvt Ltd, Huwel Lifesciences, Ubio Biotechnology Systems Pvt Ltd, Dhiti Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, MagGenome Technologies Pvt Ltd, Bigtec Pvt Ltd and Yaathum Biotech Pvt Ltd. have been recommended funding support to boost indigenous production and scale-up of molecular and rapid diagnostic tests to meet the current demand in the country.

Common shared facility to manufacture diagnostic kits and ventilators will be established at Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) under National Biopharma Mission of DBT to provide scale up production capacity to different manufacturers. Furthermore, affordable thermopile based ultrasonic sensors for screening of COVID-19 suspects and indigenous production of novel PPE for healthcare professionals have also been recommended support under this call.

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