

## **NCCS biobank is recognized by ICMR as a designated biorepository for COVID-19**

To contribute to the ongoing national efforts against COVID-19, DBT's National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Pune has established a biorepository in association with the B. J. Medical College and the Armed Forces Medical College. This bio-bank collects and stores components of blood called peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and plasma, from clinical samples. Established with due approvals from the appropriate authorities, this biobank began operations in May, 2020 and has stored eighty-three samples so far.



It functions in compliance with the guidelines and requirements of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which includes obtaining informed consent from the patients or their family members prior to sample collection, and following the standard operating procedures formulated for this purpose. This biobank has been recognized by the ICMR as a designated biorepository.

The NCCS Pune is one of the five institutes of the DBT to have received this recognition. A network of seventeen such biorepositories 1 across India was established by the ICMR to provide a structured mechanism to collect and store clinical samples from COVID patients in the country. Research using samples from these biorepositories would help better understand the disease in the Indian scenario. The document, 'Establishment of a network of biorepositories in India', which is available on the ICMR website (<https://www.icmr.gov.in/cbiorn.html>), provides details about this initiative undertaken for the benefit of the nation.

With the number of COVID-19 cases continuing to rise and the current pandemic showing little signs of letting up, it may continue to be a major concern for months to come. Early diagnosis and treatment are of paramount importance in the war against this disease. Research and development are also critical for public health benefits in the short and long term. Biobanks play a key role in supporting and facilitating these activities. These biological repositories collect and store different kinds of well characterized clinical samples from patients. Such samples are crucial tools for research, which provides vital insights into the biology of the virus and the body's responses to it. They, thus, serve as a precious biological resource to develop and validate diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, and to design better mitigation strategies. Biorepositories are therefore a boon for public health management, especially in situations like the current pandemic.

**Link:** <https://www.nccs.res.in/>

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