

## **SCTIMST to organize commercial launch of Agappe Chitra Magna for detection of COVID 19**

The commercial launch of, Agappe Chitra Magna, a magnetic nanoparticle-based RNA extraction kit for use during testing for detection of COVID-19 developed by Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST) - Trivandrum, an Institute of National Importance of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) along with Agappe Diagnostics Ltd, an *in vitro* diagnostics manufacturing company based in Cochin is being organized on May 21, 2020, at 4.30 PM.

The launch programme is being organized by SCTIMST in collaboration with Agappe Diagnostics Ltd at the Biomedical Technology Wing of SCTIMST.

Dr. VK Saraswat, NITI Aayog member and President of Institute Body of SCTIMST, and Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, DST, Govt of India, will participate in the commercial launch of Agappe Chitra Magna, through video conferencing. Dr. VK Saraswat will formally announce the commercial launch, which would be followed by the first sale of the product by Mr. Thomas John, Managing Director, Agappe Diagnostics, to officials from Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi.

Inexpensive, fast, and accurate testing for COVID-19 virus is the cornerstone of containing its spread and providing appropriate help to the infected. The Chitra Magna, an innovative RNA extraction kit developed by SCTIMST under the leadership of senior scientist, Dr. Anoopkumar Thekkuveetil, was transferred to Agappe Diagnostics in April 2020, and will now be available in the market as Agappe Chitra Magna RNA Isolation Kit. This product has been independently validated at National Institute of Virology for Covid19 RNA isolation. Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has given approval for the commercialization of this kit. The kit can be used for RNA extraction for RT-LAMP, RT-qPCR, RT-PCR and other isothermal and PCR based protocols for the detection of SARS-COV-2.

It uses an innovative technology for isolating RNA using magnetic nanoparticles to capture the RNA from the patient sample. The magnetic nanoparticle beads bind to the viral RNA and, when exposed to a magnetic field, give a highly purified and concentrated RNA. As the sensitivity of the detection method is dependent on getting an adequate quantity of viral RNA, this innovation enhances the chances of identifying positive cases.

It is estimated that India would require about 8 lakh RNA extraction kits per month during the next six months, and Agappe Chitra Magna RNA Isolation Kit priced around Rs. 150 per kit is expected to reduce the cost of testing and the country's dependence on imported kits which cost around Rs 300. Agappe Diagnostics has a manufacturing capacity of 3 lakh kits per month.