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UK Biobank to gather SARS-CoV-2 infection data on its 500,000 participants

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Testing to also identify participants for UK Biobank's SARS-CoV-2 repeat imaging study, which will help scientistsÃ¢â?¬Â¯to understand how the virus affectsÃ¢â?¬Â¯internal organs.



UK Biobank, the large-scale biomedical database and research resource, announces today the launch of a study that will enable scientists to monitor the long-term health effects of COVID-19, sometimes known as “Long COVID”.

In the largest study of its kind, all half million UK Biobank participants will be invited to receive a self-test kit to find out if they have SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. Data from confirmatory tests that the antibodies are due to past infection (rather than vaccination) will be added to UK Biobank’s biomedical database and made available to the scientific research community. This unique dataset, combined with the genetic and lifestyle information already collected by UK Biobank and regular updates of health information, will allow researchers and scientists to study the potential long-term impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The home antibody test kits have been provided by the Department of Health and Social Care. UK Biobank will use Amazon’s logistics network to distribute these kits to participants across the UK. Amazon is waiving fees and providing this service free of charge.

Testing the entire UK Biobank cohort will also identify suitable candidates for UK Biobank’s SARS-CoV-2 repeat imaging study. Before the pandemic, 50,000 participants attended UK Biobank’s imaging assessment centres where they each had detailed imaging of their brain, heart, body and arteries. Up to 1,500 participants identified by the antibody tests as having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 andÃ¢â?¬Â¯1,500 others who have not been infected will be scanned for a second time. This study willÃ¢â?¬Â¯enableÃ¢â?¬Â¯scientistsÃ¢â?¬Â¯to understand how SARS-CoV-2 affectsÃ¢â?¬Â¯internal organs, helping to understand possible long-term health effects of the virus.Ã¢â?¬Â¯

With its extensive biomedical database, UK Biobank has been uniquely positioned to carry out vital research into the COVID-19 pandemic. The study announced on March 16, 2021 is UK Biobank’s latest contribution to enabling greater understanding of SARS-CoV-2, having recently announced the results of its antibody study, which found that most people infected by SARS-CoV-2 retain antibodies for at least 6 months post-infection.