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Israel's BATM launches no-swab saliva-based COVID-19 test

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New molecular diagnostics kit that uses self-collected saliva samples while ensuring diagnostic accuracy for specificity and sensitivity

Israel-based BATM, a leading provider of real-time technologies for networking solutions and medical laboratory systems, announces on March 11, 2021, that it has launched a new molecular diagnostics kit that uses self-collected saliva samples to test for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). Kits are expected to be delivered this month (April 2021). This CE-certified kit is able to detect all known variants of COVID-19 and asymptomatic cases.

These RT-PCR tests can maintain diagnostic accuracy by easing the sample collection method. The kit is part of Adaltis' MOLgen product range. Saliva samples can be collected by an individual chewing a cotton ball for 30 seconds and then spitting it (or spitting directly) into a small plastic collector tube (Salivette). BATM claims that its RT-PCR technique will ensure the highest levels of diagnostic accuracy for both specificity and sensitivity. Currently, the available tests in the market use the lateral flow method, which is far less accurate causing many false negatives and positives.

Other benefits over the existing COVID-19 tests:

- Processing times at the laboratory are significantly reduced as the RNA extraction phase that is required for the existing swabbing methods before putting the samples into the PCR instrument is not needed for the Group's saliva-based test (which operates under a protocol developed at Yale University). The RNA extraction phase is also expensive and the main cause of contaminations that result in false diagnoses by nasopharyngeal swab samples.
- All standard PCR instruments can execute this test at a rate of c. 150-180 per hour, which (including the extraction phase) is approximately five times the rate for a nasopharyngeal test. The portable device can be operated by a single person and facilitate an excess of 1,000 tests per hour.

The non-invasive and self-assisted sample collection method is very beneficial while screening children, the elderly, and people with disabilities where the existing swabbing methods can cause distress. The rapid test can also be deployed at airports.