



सत्यमेव जयते

प्रोफेसर (डा.) बलराम भार्गव, पद्म श्री
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सचिव, भारत सरकार
स्वास्थ्य अनुसंधान विभाग
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय एवं
महानिदेशक, आई सी एम आर

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DONo.ECD/COVID19/Misc./2020
Dated 25th May, 2020

To

Chief Secretary (all States/ UTs)
Advisor to Governor/ Lt Governor/ Administrator

Subject: Strategy for COVID19 testing and firming up price for RT-PCR test through private
labs – regarding

Dear colleague,

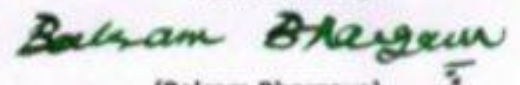
I congratulate you all for tremendous efforts being made to contain the Corona virus by adopting trace, track, test, isolate, quarantine and treat the infected persons to break the chain and save precious lives. In this endeavour, ICMR has been proactively reaching out to you in facilitating scaling up of testing facilities. As of now, there are 428 Government and 182 private labs for COVID 19 testing, spread across almost all states and UTs of the country. ICMR has been making sincere efforts to provide testing kits and reagents through the 16 distribution depots created at various ICMR Institutes.

2. At the beginning of COVID19 pandemic, there was a global crisis of testing kits and reagents as India was heavily reliant on imported products for molecular detection of viruses. As such, in-mid March, 20120, no rates for RT-PCR test for Corona virus was available for reference in the country. Keeping in view the cost of imported kits and efforts involved in carrying out the test, ICMR suggested the upper limit of a single test as ~INR 4,500 vide its letter dated 17/3/2020.

3. In this intervening period, all out efforts have been made to facilitate local companies by handholding and promoting them to locally manufacture swabs, viral transport media and RNA extraction kits. Further, indigenous diagnostic kits are being approved on fast-track basis for RT-PCR testing. Parallely, TrueNat based test for COVID19 has also been validated and included as a testing modality at the level of district hospitals/ PHCs. Inclusion of other alternate platforms like CBNAAT/GeneXpert and Abott HIV viral load testing machines, are further improving the situation. To sum up, concerted efforts have been made to ramp up the testing infrastructure along with indigenous development, validation and production of testing kits for RT-PCR tests.
4. Now, testing supplies are also stabilizing and many of you have started procuring such kits from local market. Due to varied options of testing materials/ kits including indigenous ones, the prices are becoming competitive and are undergoing reduction. As you are fully aware, COVID19 has been declared as a pandemic and ICMR continuously advocates aggressive testing of ILI symptomatic persons for which RT-PCR test is considered as Gold Standard.
5. In this backdrop and keeping in view the evolving prices of the testing commodities, the earlier suggested upper ceiling of INR 4,500 vide letter dated 17/3/2020 may not be applicable now and therefore all State governments/ UT Administrations are advised to negotiate with private labs and fix up mutually agreeable prices for samples being sent by the government and also for private individuals desirous of testing by these labs.
6. Let me reiterate that aggressive timely testing is the standard protocol for containing the virus as well as to provide treatment to save precious human lives. I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to you and your entire team involved in this fight against COVID19.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Balram Bhargava)

Copy to: Addl.Chief Secretary/ Principal Secretary/ Secretary (Health & F.W.)/Commissioner (Health & F.W.) – all State/ UTs

CC: Secretary (Health & F.W.), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi – for information pl.