

News Highlights:

COVID-19 Test Approvals

- The U.S. FDA authorized the first **antigen test for COVID-19**. Quidel Corporation's nasal swab test detects the presence of novel coronavirus proteins. One of the main advantages of an antigen test is the speed of the test, which can provide results in minutes. **Positive results** from antigen tests are highly accurate, but there is a **higher chance of false negatives**, so negative results do not rule out infection.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-first-antigen-test-help-rapid-detection-virus-causes>

- An **antigen test** is different than PCR and antibody tests. The **PCR diagnostic test** (the most commonly used test so far during the pandemic) takes the longest to process, but is the most reliable and detects an **active infection**. The **antibody test**, also called a **serology test**, detects antibodies to the virus in your blood. There are many coronaviruses, some of which are present in the common cold. Because the coronavirus antibodies closely resemble each other, the antibody test result can be difficult to interpret. This article explains the three main kinds of COVID-19 tests and what they are used for:

<https://miami.cbslocal.com/2020/04/29/coronavirus-testing-pcr-antibody-antigen-what-to-know-about-the-three-main-types-of-covid-19-tests/>

- The U.S. FDA authorized Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory's **at-home diagnostic test for COVID-19**. The test, which requires a doctor's prescription, is the first that uses **saliva samples**. The FDA has authorized more than 80 COVID-19 tests so far, and this is the second with an at-home option. Home tests are mailed back to the Rutgers lab for processing.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-first-diagnostic-test-using-home-collection-saliva>

COVID-19 Treatments Research and News

- A research team from the University of Texas at Austin, the National Institutes of Health and Ghent University in Belgium are using antibodies produced by a four-year-old **llama** to develop a **new antibody therapy** against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.



Llama ("Winter") pictured in front, provided antibodies for the study.

Photo from University of Texas - Photo credit: Tim Coppens.

<https://news.utexas.edu/2020/04/29/antibodies-from-llamas-could-help-in-fight-against-covid-19/>

- The effectiveness of the combination of antimalarial drug **hydroxychloroquine** and **antibiotic azithromycin** against COVID-19 has become a very controversial issue in the medical community. Researchers in France published a "retrospective study" of 1,061 patients who had been given the treatment combination and found that when given early (before the disease has complications), it is safe and associated with very low fatality rates.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1477893920302179>

- Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, **studied viruses for decades but never caught one until six weeks ago**. His symptoms started with sudden fever and stabbing headache, and his skull and even hair felt painful. *Science Magazine* published an interview with him, translated from Dutch:

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/05/finally-virus-got-me-scientist-who-fought-ebola-and-hiv-reflects-facing-death-covid-19>

- A Kaiser Health News analysis of California **nursing home quality ratings** show that those with COVID-19 outbreaks tend to have had a record of not always following basic staffing and infection control rules.

<https://khn.org/news/covid-plagued-california-nursing-homes-often-had-problems-in-past/>

- Northwestern University researchers analyzed publicly available patient data from around the globe, and discovered a strong correlation between **vitamin D levels and cytokine storm** -- a hyperinflammatory condition caused by an overactive immune system -- as well as a correlation between vitamin D deficiency and mortality. The research suggests patients with severe deficiency are twice as likely to experience major complications from COVID-19.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/05/200507121353.htm>

- University of Idaho researchers will lead a national effort to find out whether the **breast milk** of women who test positive for novel coronavirus also contains the virus, and if so, whether it can infect infants.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-05/uoi-ggf050420.php

- A small study from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York (not yet peer-reviewed) suggests that **breast milk** from women who have had COVID-19 has **antibodies that can protect the baby** from getting the virus. This Reuters scientific roundup also contains other recent scientific study highlights such as "New coronavirus antibody test highly accurate," and "Life-threatening syndrome develops in some children after coronavirus exposure."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-science-idUSKBN22K2GE>

- This week's stats: 4,077,594 worldwide cases and 1.3 million U.S. cases as of 10 May, 2020. Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus dashboard:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

FDA Drug Approvals:

- The FDA approved Novartis' **Tabrecta (capmatinib)** to treat non-small cell lung cancer that has spread to other parts of the body. It also approved the drug's companion diagnostic device that will be used to determine if Tabrecta is an appropriate treatment for a patient.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-targeted-therapy-treat-aggressive-form-lung-cancer>

- FDA approved AstraZeneca's type 2 diabetes drug **Farxiga** for a condition called "reduced ejection fraction" that makes diabetics prone related to **heart failure**.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-new-treatment-type-heart-failure>
([Patient Reviews for Farxiga](#))

Alzheimers News:

- Scientists have discovered a link between the **herpes virus** and **Alzheimer's disease**. A lab-based model of the brain, consisting of human brain-like tissue infected with the virus, became riddled with amyloid plaque-like formations — the hallmark of Alzheimer's. Researchers suggest that the human brain's response to **HSV-1 (common cold sore virus)** and other viruses might be what gets Alzheimer's disease going years before symptoms, and that the plaques and other pathology that most people thought caused the disease are instead a defensive response to the true cause.

<https://www.statnews.com/2020/05/06/researchers-show-herpes-link-to-alzheimers/>

- Older adults with **low intake** of foods and drinks containing **flavonoids**, such as berries, apples, and tea, were more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease and related dementias over 20 years, compared with people who consumed more of those items, according to a new study of 2,800 people aged 50 and over.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/05/200505121701.htm>

Ask a Patient has a new resource guide: "**Health Benefits of a Lower Salt Diet and Resources for High Blood Pressure**" available in PDF format with your contribution of \$15. It includes an index of 137 medications. Help Ask a Patient continue its mission of providing an independent forum for health care consumers.

<https://www.askapatient.com/store-askapatient.asp>

AskaPatient®

Reading and Resources:
Health Benefits of Lower Salt Diet
Medication Treatments
for High Blood Pressure

Mini-Cookbook
HEALTHY RECIPES
for a Lower-Sodium Diet

May 2020



AskaPatient Weekly Healthcare Newsletter 5-10-2020

Trouble viewing this email? View it as a [web page](#).

Subscribe and visit us at <https://www.askapatient.com>

Check out the up-to-date health news feed on our web site:

[Pharm News](#)

[Unsubscribe](#) from the weekly newsletter.

Please contact us with suggestions, comments, or questions:

admin@askapatient.com

We welcome your feedback.



Copyright © *|CURRENT_YEAR|* AskaPatient ®