

Medical Research Agency

<https://abm.gov.pl/en/news/61,MRA-launches-nationwide-study-of-new-coronavirus-mutation.html>
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MRA launches nationwide study of new coronavirus mutation

The Medical Research Agency, on behalf of the Minister of Health, in collaboration with the Malopolska Centre for Biotechnology at the Jagiellonian University, is launching a nationwide study to monitor the genetic variation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Poland.

The project was developed in response to the Ministry of Health's reported need to conduct a nationwide geno-epidemiological study of genetic variants of SARS-CoV-2, as well as the need to monitor the threat that new genetic variants of the virus may pose, particularly to the effectiveness of vaccination against COVID-19.

The aim of the project will be to monitor the variability and evolution of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Poland over the next 18 months. The direct effect will be a continuous verification of the presence of variants of concern (VOC) in the country, but also an analysis of the evolution of the virus in terms of vaccine efficacy and the possibility of reinfection, or the effectiveness of available diagnostic tests RT-qPCR -. underlines the project leader prof. Krzysztof Pyrc - Head of Virology Laboratory at the Biotechnology Centre of the Jagiellonian University.

Mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 virus genes may contribute to the increased infectivity and disease-causing capacity of the virus, as well as its lower susceptibility to recovered and vaccine-induced antibodies. In addition, mutations may hinder the correct diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 with available diagnostic tools (RT-PCR, antigen tests), which should be updated to recognize the latest genetic variants of the virus. The project under the direction of prof. Krzysztof Pyrcia will allow monitoring the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 virus in Poland in terms of the impact of variability on epidemiology, effectiveness of molecular and antigenic tests, vaccination and potential antiviral drugs.

The initiation of a study on behalf of the Minister of Health is an important element for further decisions in pandemic management. We will soon find out if the coronavirus mutation is relevant to the spread, infectivity and course of the pandemic. Thanks to the nationwide study, we will know not only whether the mutation is present in Poland, but also how widespread it is and whether it has an impact on the development of the epidemic," comments the acting director of the study - President of the Medical Research Agency Radosław Sierpiński MD, PhD.

Within the framework of the project it is planned to sequence virus isolates collected from patients fulfilling epidemiological criteria and to perform bioinformatic analysis of the obtained data. On this basis, it will be possible to identify the genetic variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus present, taking into account risk factors.

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