

PRESS RELEASE

VIROCLINICS-DDL AND CEPI STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRODUCTION OF OMICRON SARS-COV-2 VARIANT FOR DISTRIBUTION IN THE CEPI COVID-19 VACCINE TESTING NETWORK

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands and OSLO, Norway, 14 December 2021: Today, [Viroclinics-DDL](#), a global Contract Research Organization supporting clinical and preclinical studies for drug and vaccine development and [CEPI](#), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, signed an agreement which allows Viroclinics-DDL to produce and distribute laboratory stocks of the Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant for use in CEPI's centralised COVID-19 vaccine testing network. The produced Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant will be used for the performance of laboratory assays, assessing the neutralizing potential of COVID-19 vaccines against the new variant.



Following the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its spread, CEPI launched a global network of laboratories in October 2020, to centralize assessment of COVID-19 vaccine candidates. This network is the largest global group using the same methods and materials, like reagents—substances used to carry out a scientific test—to standardise the evaluation of COVID-19 vaccines currently undergoing preclinical and clinical trials. To date, over 30 COVID-19 vaccine developers have now used the network, with more than 15,000 clinical trial samples submitted for testing.

Viroclinics-DDL is one of the proud members of the network offering its analytical services. Aside from its analytical services, Viroclinics-DDL produces laboratory stocks of Variants of Concern to be distributed to all laboratories in the network capable of working with live virus. The production of live viruses is a laborious and meticulous task, which needs to be performed in a BSL-3 laboratory. For the confirmation of the genotyping of all SARS-CoV-2 variants, Viroclinics-DDL builds further on its Next Gen sequencing platforms.

Data obtained from the laboratories performing vaccine tests against the Omicron variant will be used to inform COVID-19 vaccine developers as to whether their candidate could potentially neutralize the Omicron variant. The test will be available at the CEPI COVID-19 vaccine testing network from February 2022.

Daive Molho, CEO of Viroclinics-DDL, said: *"We are proud to be part of the CEPI Central Laboratory Network. In this joint effort we will keep contributing to the analyses of the efficacy of SARS-COV-2 vaccines against new variants."*

Dr Melanie Saville, Director of Vaccine R&D at CEPI said: *"In light of the emergence and rapid spread of the Omicron variant, we need to ensure that the lifesaving COVID-19 tools currently being developed or deployed around the world are still fit for purpose. The work outlined today by our laboratory partner, Viroclinics-DDL, is of utmost importance in the ongoing pandemic response, through enabling our global COVID-19 vaccine testing network to rapidly assess the extent to which COVID-19 vaccines are still capable of providing sufficient protection against this devastating virus and its variants."*

Viroclinics-DDL has a long track record of working with coronaviruses. Its scientists were at the forefront of the discovery of SARS in 2003 and in various consortia, Viroclinics-DDL participated in the discovery of MERS coronavirus. Viroclinics-DDL aims to use its expertise in cell-based serology and molecular diagnostics, combined with its high through put assays, to prevent future pandemics.

About Viroclinics-DDL

Viroclinics-DDL is a leading specialty contract research organization, serving the biopharmaceutical community with a broad range of preclinical research, clinical diagnostic, assay development, laboratory, and clinical trial logistic services. It offers its clients a global reach through a network of 35 processing laboratories. Viroclinics-DDL extensive experience in clinical and preclinical studies for viruses, including its specialty in respiratory and blood-borne viruses, puts the company at the forefront in supporting the development of vaccines, antibodies and antiviral compounds targeting viral infectious diseases. Its in-house state-of-the-art preclinical and clinical BSL-2 and BSL-3 laboratories facilitate complex experiments with highly pathogenic organisms. Viroclinics-DDL is based in Rotterdam, Rijswijk and Schaijk in the Netherlands, and employs more than 390 highly trained, dedicated scientists and technical experts.

More information

Visit www.viroclinics.com and www.ddl.nl.

About CEPI

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil organisations, launched at Davos in 2017, to develop vaccines against future epidemics. Prior to COVID-19, CEPI's work focused on developing vaccines against the Ebola Virus Disease, Lassa virus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, Nipah virus, Rift Valley Fever virus and Chikungunya virus. It has over 20 vaccine candidates against these pathogens in development. CEPI has also invested in new platform technologies for rapid vaccine development against unknown pathogens (Disease X).

During the current pandemic, CEPI initiated multiple programmes to develop vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 and its variants with a focus on speed, scale and access. These programmes leverage the rapid response platforms developed by CEPI's partners prior to the emergence of COVID-19, as well as new collaborations. The aim is to advance clinical development of a diverse portfolio of safe and effective COVID-19 candidates and to enable fair allocation of these vaccines worldwide through COVAX.

CEPI's 5-year plan lays out a \$3.5 billion roadmap to compress vaccine development timelines to 100 days, develop a broadly protective vaccine against COVID-19 and other *Betacoronaviruses*, and create a "library" of vaccine candidates for use against known and unknown pathogens. The plan is available at <http://www.endpandemics.cepi.net>.

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