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GBRC signs MoU with with private companies for COVID-19 Vaccine, improved diagnostics

The three companies include vaccine developers and manufacturers Hester Biosciences and Vekaria Healthcare along with diagnostic and research entity Neuberg Supratech Reference Laboratory.

By: **Express News Service** | Ahmedabad | Published: May 2, 2020 7:11:39 am

The first project is for COVID-19 vaccine development. (Representational)

Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC), run by the department of science and technology of the state government, inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with three different Gujarat-based private companies with a vision for developing a vaccine for COVID19.

The three companies include vaccine developers and manufacturers Hester Biosciences and Vekaria Healthcare along with diagnostic and research entity Neuberg Supratech Reference Laboratory.

Speaking to this paper, Dr Sandip Shah, director of Supratech, said, “We will be looking at identifying the peptide chain and we will identify the specific immunological reaction in this chain.”

According to the tweets of Professor Chaitanya Joshi, who heads GBRC, the institute shall be extending its technical know-how, as all companies will deploy different routes of vaccine development based on conventional (live attenuated, inactivated) as well as recombinant technology.

As part of the five-year agreement between Supratech and GBRC, effective May 1, Supratech will work on two projects for the Government of Gujarat, states a press note.

The first project is for COVID-19 vaccine development, wherein Neuberg Supratech will look for immune markers for the COVID-19 positive patients. The company plans to use several of its in-house high throughput sequencing machines for this project.

The second project involves developing cost-effective post-viral extraction procedures. Currently, the spend is around INR 3,500/- for consumables for RT-PCR testing, that Neuberg Supratech aims to bring down to less than Rs 1,000, by optimising the RT-PCR testing consumables and procedures that are presently being used. This will also increase the testing capacity by 2 -3 times and even the turnaround times will be bought down to within 2 hours, according to Supratech.

According to Dr Shah, MoU is only the first theoretical step although he expects regulatory approval to come through in the next few days, subsequent to which grant shall be applied for funding the project.