Abbott Announces Its Pandemic Defense Coalition: A Global Network Of Expert Collaborators Designed To Help Prevent Future Pandemics, Currently Searching For COVID-19 Variants

- The Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition is a first-of-its-kind global scientific network dedicated to the early detection of, and rapid response to, future pandemic threats

- The coalition builds on Abbott's decades of leadership in virus surveillance and helps to analyze virus samples for unknown diseases and detect mutations and variants including for COVID-19

- Abbott is bringing together global collaborators specializing in identification of unknown diseases, surveillance, virus sample collection, testing and sequencing

- Abbott will rapidly develop tests that can be used to help identify, isolate and contain outbreaks when potential new virus threats are identified

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., March 11, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Abbott (NYSE: ABT) today announced the formation of the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition, a first-of-its-kind global scientific and public health partnership dedicated to the early detection of, and rapid response to, future pandemic threats. By connecting global centers of excellence in laboratory testing, genetic sequencing and public health research, the program will identify new pathogens, analyze potential risk level, rapidly develop and deploy new diagnostic testing and assess public health impact in real time.

The coalition is designed to help the global scientific and health community identify new viral threats, take quick action when one is discovered, and help prevent future pandemics. The sequences of the viruses that are found will be published in a public database so that health officials and laboratories can work together to identify if it's a novel strain, or a virus that has previously been detected. This program expands upon the viral surveillance and discovery work that Abbott has performed over the last three decades.

"We cannot fight what we cannot see coming. This program establishes a global network of 'eyes on the ground' that are always looking for threats, which helps the global health community to stay one step ahead of the next viral threat, and allows us to utilize Abbott's expertise and technology to quickly develop tests to address them," said Gavin Cloherty, Ph.D., head of infectious disease research at Abbott. "The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated a clear need for advanced surveillance and viral sequencing – and the critically important role of testing. Understanding what pathogenic threats are emerging will help us test, diagnose and hopefully help prevent the next pandemic."

Abbott is helping look for COVID-19 variants and ensuring COVID-19 tests are effective
Abbott is playing an important role in helping to monitor for new variants or mutations to the virus that causes COVID-19. The company is collecting virus samples from around the world and looking for any changes (mutations) to the virus's genetic sequencing.

With decades of experience in viral surveillance, Abbott specifically designs its tests, including COVID-19 tests, with viral evolution in mind. As new strains are discovered, Abbott vigorously analyzes them so it can ensure its diagnostic tests can detect them. The coalition provides the network to collaborate with other leading institutions on this effort.

A global force of scientific experts focused on outsmarting viruses
The new Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition consists of global collaborators specializing in virus identification, surveillance, sample collection, testing and data analytics. The process to identify potential new viral threats begins with physicians across the network identifying patients with unknown conditions that they cannot treat or diagnose. Next, patient samples are tested by our partners on a global scale, followed by genetic sequencing and analyses to spot trends and identify peculiarities that may indicate an emerging threat or outbreak. If a potential threat is discovered, Abbott will quickly develop diagnostic testing to assist in containment efforts.

Abbott's growing network of partners includes organizations in strategic geographic locations:

- Colombia/Wisconsin One-Health Consortium at the Universidad Nacional deColombia, Medellin, Colombia
- Faculty of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Institut de Recherche en Santé, de Surveillance Epidémiologique et de Formations (IRESSEF) Dakar, Senegal
- KRISP, Genomic Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal,Durban, South Africa
- Rush University System for Health, Chicago, U.S.
- The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica
- Universidade de Sañ Paulo, Sañ Paulo, Brazil
- YRG Care, Chennai, India

Abbott is in talks with additional non-governmental organizations, governments and research centers of excellence regarding participation and collaboration.

"In a sophisticated network like the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition, we have access to best-in-class science and technology that makes data collection, analysis and sharing efficient and effective," said Professor Souleymane Mboup, president of Institut de Recherche en Santé, de Surveillance Epidemiologique et de Formations (IRESSEF) of Dakar, Senegal. "The key here is

collaboration; no single lab or organization in any one country would be able to conduct testing and analysis of this breadth and scale but connecting global centers of excellence makes it possible for us all to assist in identifying the next potential threats to public health."

A history of hunting viruses around the globe – and a future dedicated to further advancing this vital work
As a leader in blood screening and infectious disease testing, Abbott created its Global Viral Surveillance Program more than 25 years ago to monitor HIV and hepatitis viruses and identify mutations, which helps ensure the company's diagnostic tests remain up to date and enable researchers to proactively evaluate and solve infectious disease challenges. This surveillance program will now be a part of the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition.

Through its surveillance efforts, the company recently announced the discovery of a high prevalence of HIV Controllers – a group of people living with controlled HIV without antiretroviral medications in the Democratic Republic of Congo[1], which could hold the key to a cure. Abbott also announced the finding of a new strain of HIV in 2019[2].

And looking ahead, Abbott will focus on testing and digital solutions accessible to more people in more places for many of the world's most pressing health challenges, including infectious diseases. This work also is an important part of Abbott's 2030 sustainability strategy which includes a focus on transforming the care of infectious diseases. Across its business and through collaboration, Abbott will create new technologies to detect and monitor infectious diseases such as COVID-19, HIV, malaria and hepatitis, as well as tomorrow's pandemic threats.

About Abbott
Abbott is a global healthcare leader that helps people live more fully at all stages of life. Our portfolio of life-changing technologies spans the spectrum of healthcare, with leading businesses and products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutritionals and branded generic medicines. Our 109,000 colleagues serve people in more than 160 countries.

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References

1. M.G. Berg et al., A high prevalence of potential HIV elite controllers identified over 30 years in Democratic Republic of Congo, EBioMedicine (2021), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ebiom.2021.103258
2. Yamaguchi J, Vallari A, McArthur C, Sthreshley L, Cloherty G, Berg M, Rodgers MA. Complete genome sequence of CG-0018a-01 establishes HIV-1 subtype L. Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes. 2019, https://journals.lww.com/jaids/Abstract/publishahead/Complete_genome_sequence_of_CG_0018a_01.96307.aspx

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