

Consortium of four city clusters to upscale SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus genomic surveillance

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The new effort will track the emergence of viral variants correlated to epidemiological dynamics and clinical outcomes



A consortium of four city clusters – Bengaluru, Hyderabad, New Delhi, and Pune – has been established to upscale SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus genomic surveillance, complementing national efforts led by INSACOG. The consortium is established with generous support and seed funding from Rockefeller Foundation.

The new effort will track the emergence of viral variants correlated to epidemiological dynamics and clinical outcomes. The consortium aims to develop targeted sampling strategies based on granular epidemiological and clinical data. Coupled with intense environmental surveillance and advanced computational techniques, the consortium would also focus on building capabilities for real-time surveillance and epidemiology.

The consortium is led by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB), Hyderabad, and currently includes different partners in three other cities: NCBS-TIFR, InStem-DBT and NIMHANS in Bengaluru; CSIR-IGIB in New Delhi; Pune Knowledge Cluster, IISER-Pune and CSIR-NCL in Pune. It will work closely with local governments, hospitals, and clinicians. In collaboration with INSACOG, the consortium aims to eventually make this a national effort by expanding to other strategic locations in India.

Dr Rakesh Mishra, Advisor, CSIR-CCMB will lead these efforts along with Prof Satyajit Mayor, NCBS, Prof LS Shashidhara, Pune Knowledge Cluster and Dr Anurag Agrawal, CSIR-IGIB. The team says, "We aim to develop strategies and capabilities to identify Variants of Concern before they spread widely and cause outbreaks. This will also help correlate with clinical symptoms and disease severity, potentially associated with emerging variants."

Prof Satyajit Mayor, Director, NCBS adds on behalf of the Bengaluru partners, "Leveraging the capacity of each of the city clusters both in academic institutions and industry, is a much-needed effort at this time. This can help create a sustainable platform for genomic surveillance long after Covid, and many other infectious diseases."