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Comparative evaluation of the sensitivities of SARS-CoV-2 antigen rapid tests

Aim

Comparison of different antigen rapid tests with using identical sample material

Material

Pools from nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs.

Dry swabs were included in PBS; moist swabs were already included in the transport media of various compositions. Pools are random mixtures obtained from up to 10 samples of comparable CT values diluted 1:10 in negative samples in PBS. The CT values of a pool were determined by means of different PCR assays, and the putative number of RNA copies calculated with the aid of the INSTAND standards. In the case of the PCRs used, a CT value of 25 corresponds to around 10^6 RNA copies/mL. 18 samples each were analysed with $CT < 25$, 23 samples with CT between 25 and 30, and 9 samples with $CT > 30$. The replication of the virus in cell culture was determined as a possible correlate for infectiousness as another characteristic of the samples.

Method

The pools were aliquoted, frozen, shipped, and thawed for evaluation of the tests. For each test, 50 µL of the pool were analysed using the components of the test provided, e.g. swabs. Laboratories participating in the comparative evaluation included the Robert Koch-Institut, the Paul-Ehrlich-Institut, the reference laboratory for coronaviruses (Charité), and the Institute for Microbiology of the German Army (Bundeswehr).

Summary

This comparative evaluation of a large number of SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests (point of care tests; POCT) of different designs and manufacturers with the same sample set allows an overview of the current state of art regarding sensitivity. The results do not allow any conclusions regarding specificity of the tests.

Those POCTs which have up to now been included in the evaluation and have been assessed as reflecting the current state of the art are listed in the table below. Other tests, which were assessed as not reflecting the state of the art were deleted from the list of the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte, BfArM). This comparative evaluation is constantly continued, and the table is amended accordingly.

You should be aware that this comparative evaluation can only cover a random sample of the SARS-CoV-2 rapid antigen tests listed by the BfArM, thus eligible for refunding, and that many other products could not (yet) be taken into account, despite the interests on the part of the manufacturers/distributors.

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Overview of SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Tests Assessed as Reflecting the Current State of the Art

Name of Test	Manufacturer or Distributor
Panbio™ COVID-19 Ag Rapid Test Device (NASOPHARYNGEAL)	Abbott Rapid Diagnostics Jena GmbH
RIDA®QUICK SARS-CoV-2 Antigen	R-Biopharm AG
SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Antigen Test	SD BIOSENSOR (Roche Diagnostics GmbH)
NADAL® COVID-19 Ag Schnelltest	nal von minden gmbh
STANDARD™ F COVID-19 Ag FIA	SD BIOSENSOR
STANDARD™ Q COVID-19 Ag Test	SD BIOSENSOR
BIOSYNEX COVID-19 Ag BSS	BIOSYNEX SWISS SA
MEDsan® SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Test	MEDsan GmbH
TestNOW® - COVID-19 Antigen	Affimedix
NowCheck® COVID-19 Ag Test	BIONOTE
Coronavirus Ag Rapid Test Cassette (Swab)	Zhejiang Orient Gene Biotech Co.,Ltd
Sofia SARS Antigen FIA	Quidel Corporation
COVID-19 Ag Test Kit	Guangdong Wesail Biotech Co., Ltd.
CLINITEST® Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test	Siemens Healthineers
ESPLINE® SARS-CoV-2	Fujirebio Inc. (Mast Diagnostica GmbH)
BD Veritor™ System for Rapid Detection of SARS-CoV-2	Becton Dickinson
GenBody COVID-19 Ag	IVC Pragen Healthcare
LumiraDx SARS-CoV-2 Ag Test	LumiraDX
Exdia COVID-19-Ag-Test	Precision Biosensor Inc. (Axon Lab AG)
SARS-CoV-2 Ag Rapid Test (FIA)	Wantai (Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy Enterprise Co., Ltd.)
SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Schnelltest	Xiamen Boson Biotech Co., Ltd (Medicovid-AG; technomed GmbH; Löwe Medizintechnik)
COVID-19 Antigen Schnelltest (Colloidal Gold)	Joinstar Biomedical Technology Co., Ltd (CIV care impuls Vertrieb)
mö-screen Corona Antigen Test	Mölab GmbH
Rapid SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Test Card	MP Biomedicals Germany GmbH
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Antigen Test Kit	Hangzhou Laihe Biotech Co., Ltd. (Lissner Qi GmbH)