



## **Diagonal Pharma Harnesses the Power of the Pandemic**

Lund, Sweden - June 9, 2020

*Only two months after foundation, Swedish medtech-startup Diagonal Pharma is already completing the second prototype of its rapid viral diagnostic platform.*

*The pilot target is for obvious reasons COVID-19.*

The platform enables a whole new way of testing — fast, easy, accurate, multiviral, and parallelised. The first trials will commence in late June on patient samples from three clinical centers at the top-tier Swedish hospitals Lund University Hospital and Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm.

The Lund-based medical technology company is backed by the Swedish government-funded research and innovation institute RISE, and was formed by Andreas Nyberg PhD, Johan Källstrand and Kushagr Punyani as the current COVID pandemic was taking off.

- There has been a lot of talk about testing, so we thought: why not sit down and make a really good test, says Andreas Nyberg, CSO at Diagonal Pharma, who, in addition to his previous scientific work within immunity, inflammation, and cancer biology, also was present early on in the now multibillion SEK-valued Swedish cancer diagnostic company Immunovia. When starting out there he was one of only five employees. When he moved on, they were more than forty.



The innovative technology that Diagonal Pharma develops is based on a combination of a molecular biological method and an electrochemical method. The company is secretive about the exact nature of these methods as a patent application is in progress.

The platform, provisionally dubbed Project Panviral, can be readily adapted to not only detect different types of viruses, but also other infectious agents, according to Andreas Nyberg. - We never aimed at only COVID-19 but from the get-go the Panviral system has been designed for detection of virtually any kind of virus and, by extension, bacteria, fungi, and parasites, he says. Let's say that a new variant of COVID appears. As soon as the scientific community has deciphered the genetic code of the virus, we can have a new test ready to be shipped in only one or two weeks.

The very first rough-but-functional version of the device was assembled in early April by Dr. Nyberg himself in the molecular biology lab at NanoLund, Lund University. By then, Diagonal Pharma had already received its first capital injection. An experienced Swedish investor group consisting of Stefan Lundgren, Peter Nilsson and John Moll has this far invested approximately two million SEK in the company. The test development and design is performed in close collaboration with the UK and Norway-based sensor company Zimmer & Peacock.

- We will pilot Panviral on patient samples collected at three top-class centers in one of our excellent academic partner labs, Andreas Nyberg says. The study will



commence in late June. In parallel, we are working on a third and final prototype as well as a bespoke reader, controller, and software solution. The third version, scheduled to be up and running in July, will be able to measure virus load in at least 100 samples at a time.

At the moment many companies are developing tests for COVID-19. Andreas Nyberg explains: - Panviral is extremely fast, accurate and reliable. A quantified test answer - basically a measurement of the amount of virus in the patient - is ready in about 15 minutes after the sample has been taken. The test is being developed to be as easy and standardised as possible. This will enable rapid integration into healthcare systems around the world. Importantly, we will be able to run many tests simultaneously. The vast majority of rapid tests that are now being developed are conducted on a single sample-basis. As a welcome bonus, clinics - both urban and rural - and other users of the platform, such as for instance airports, concert venues, and sports stadiums, will avoid the time-consuming, logistical hassle that testing in a central lab entails, he says.

The platform will be ready for upscaling and worldwide commercial launch by autumn and a scientific publication based on the collective findings of the venture is being written.

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