

## COVID-19: for national and European research coordination May 6, 2020

From the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, numerous calls were made to urgently promote research on the disease and to develop appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic means. The multiplication of uncoordinated offers has resulted in an influx of proposals, a great confusion in the projects, a multiplicity of governance, a dispersion of the means and capacities of the scientific community, at the risk of an overall inefficiency. At the European Union level, the lack of a global strategy to respond to the pandemic is confirmed by the absence of large-scale programmes and research coordination on Covid-19. Moreover, the calls for projects have been primarily oriented towards the early stages of the infectious process, thus neglecting the weight of co-morbidities, which are now seen to be important in the evolution of the disease, and the potential severity of extra-pulmonary clinical forms.

The need to allocate resources to biology-and health research having already been emphasized by the National Academy of Medicine<sup>1</sup>, it appears that the deployment of substantial resources for research will only be effective if a major correction of the observed disorder and a coordinated strategy is established.

### **Consequently, the National Academy of Medicine, the National Academy of Pharmacy and the Veterinary Academy of France recommend:**

- that a single steering committee coordinate research on Covid-19. This structure, led by AVIESAN (the French Life Sciences and Healthcare Alliance) would benefit from the support of ANR (the National Research Agency), ANRS (the National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis) and PHRC (the Hospital Clinical Research Programme) for programming, launching calls for proposals, evaluating research projects and the resources specifically allocated. The projects will cover all aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic: epidemiology, risk factors, clinical forms, prevention, pathophysiological mechanisms, therapeutic trials, vaccines, diagnostic tests, digital health, human and social sciences, health economics, ethics, etc.
- that this national coordination is part of a common national and European strategy, and that France launches a major initiative with the European Union and the member states.
- that the steering structure has also the objectives to:
  - i. pool existing French and European infrastructures: cohorts, biobanks, health data warehouses, analytical platforms;
  - ii. support the creation of Covid-19 cohorts (convalescent patients, asymptomatic carriers, nursing staff, etc.) for carrying out epidemiological, phenotypic, genetic, anthropological and social studies;
  - iii. network the biological resource centres to optimise access to collections of biological samples, including autopsy specimens;
  - iv. to identify the zoonotic source of Sars CoV-2 and to know how this virus is introduced from bats as well as the possible role of one or more intermediate hosts;
  - v. to develop a specific artificial intelligence programme: diagnosis and patient monitoring, telemedicine, decision support, population-based sampling and clustering, epidemiological modelling and therapeutic strategies;
  - vi. to promote quality communication towards the general public to inform them of research advances on COVID-19.

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<sup>1</sup> Communiqué of French Academy of medicine: "Pandemic of Covid-19: A lesson for biology-and health research", April7, 2020

CONTACT PRESSE : Virginie Gustin +33 (0)6 62 52 43 42 [virginie.gustin@academie-medecine.fr](mailto:virginie.gustin@academie-medecine.fr)

ACADÉMIE NATIONALE DE MÉDECINE, 16 rue Bonaparte - 75272 Paris cedex 06

Site : [www.academie-medecine.fr](http://www.academie-medecine.fr) / Twitter : @Acadmed