



TFORD-COVID19 INDIA

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PRESS RELEASE

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Mapping Potential Drugs for COVID-19: Task Force for Repurposing of Drugs releases its assessment

(Pune, 27 April 2020)

The Task Force for Repurposing of Drugs (TFORD) for COVID19, constituted by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India Dr K VijayRaghavan, has released its first assessment of several drug candidates and their readiness for use in India. The TFORD developed an evidence based scoring mechanism to assess drug candidates for their potential as COVID-19 therapy in India. This Task Force was constituted to track the latest and continuously evolving information on drug candidates, carry out an inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional assessment of drug candidates, anticipate and strengthen a translation ecosystem for drug development and to support informed decision making.

Over 60 drugs are currently being tested in clinical trials for COVID-19 worldwide. Many of them have been approved for use in other indication(s) and several of them are manufactured in India. With data being generated at such a rapid pace, there is need to curate this information in a manner that can help in informed decision making and enable the development of a therapeutic strategy for India. The Task Force has so far curated available information from scientific literature for 19 drug candidates which are at various stages of development for COVID-19. They have developed Heat Maps with a scoring system, which has been vetted by an inter-disciplinary advisory group, to assess the readiness and potential of a drug to be used as a therapy for COVID-19 in the Indian context. The scoring system factors in several parameters like availability and quality of scientific information from clinical trials, safety, readiness to manufacture the drugs in India and status of intellectual property. The Task Force has released its reports via the following website:

<https://nclinnovations.org/covid19/resources/>

Based on the scoring system, 2 candidates, Favipiravir and Tocilizumab seem to show promise in terms of readiness and potential for COVID-19 amongst the 19 candidates profiled so far. Favipiravir is an anti-viral drug which is approved in Japan for treating Influenza and is currently being tested in 18 clinical trials for COVID-19. Results from 2 studies shows a positive outcome. Data from the remaining are awaited. Tocilizumab is an immune-modulator approved for treatment of several autoimmune diseases. It is being tested in 24 clinical trials for COVID-19 worldwide. Early results indicate that it can be a promising therapy for patients who are critically ill. Both these drugs have the potential to be manufactured in India. Other drugs such as Hydroxychlorine and Remdesivir have also been included in the list of assessed molecules. There will be greater clarity on the potential of these drugs for treatment of COVID19 as more clinical trial results are published in the coming weeks.

According to Dr V Premnath, Coordinator of the Task Force and Head, NCL Innovations at CSIR-NCL, such a holistic, comprehensive and inter-disciplinary assessment of drug molecules for COVID 19 is a unique effort and will prove valuable for informed decision making on national strategy on drug manufacturing and therapeutic options in the coming months.

The Task Force is profiling many more drug candidates (both synthetic and phytochemicals) and will continue to update scores for the existing candidates as more data becomes available.

The Task Force is being advised by an 20 member group of clinicians, scientists, engineers, pharma industry experts, clinical trials experts and patent professionals. The Venture Center on the CSIR-NCL campus serves as the information nerve center for this Task Force.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

About TFORD-COVID19-India

The Principal Scientific Advisor to the GoI, Dr K VijayRaghavan, has constituted a S&T Core Group on COVID19. Under the aegis of the S&T Core Group on COVID19, a Task Force has been constituted focused on Repurposing of Drugs for COVID19 (in short “TFORD-COVID19”) The Task Force is being coordinated by: Dr V Premnath, Head, NCL

Innovations at CSIR-NCL and Director, Venture Center and Dr Anurag Agarwal, Director, CSIR-IGIB. The Nerve Center for the Coordination is at Venture Center, Pune (located in the campus of CSIR-NCL). The TFORD is tasked with the responsibility of guiding the course of Repursing of Drugs for COVID19 for India by providing thoroughly researched and accurate information and analytics support for decision making support of technology developers and policy makers. For more information: <https://nclinnovations.org/covid19/>

About Venture Center

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