

A Summary about the real problems of Testing and relying on tests by Kendall Nelson

Testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus has also been wrought with persistent problems. Despite billions of dollars of congressional appropriations every year to Federal agencies for public health emergency preparedness, the U.S. did not quickly dispense testing kits. The CDC's parent agency—the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)—failed miserably. Later, the CDC violated its own manufacturing standards, which led to contamination of the country's first coronavirus tests, rendering them ineffective.¹³

The two most common testing methods are reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) and antibody tests. The RT-PCR test was never meant for diagnosing disease and produces a significant number of false positives, which have been used to enforce restrictions on civil liberties, including quarantining healthy individuals. False positives also inflate numbers and lead to aggressive treatment of misdiagnosed patients.

To perform an RT-PCR test, a clinician takes a swab from a patient's nose or throat, which might contain a tiny virus particle. RT-PCR tests "work" by detecting specific genetic material within the virus. Once a sample arrives at the lab, technicians extract its nucleic acid (RNA), which holds the virus's genome. Then, technicians "amplify" certain regions of the genome. This, in effect, gives researchers a large sample that they can then compare to the new virus.

A central problem with RT-PCR tests is that they do not produce a positive-negative result. Instead, they simply determine the number of amplification cycles required to detect sufficient material to beat the arbitrary cut off between positive and negative. In other words, technicians can get a positive result by setting the specific number of cycles they do in the test. A second problem is that even assuming the tests can detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2 virus, the test does not say anything about how much virus is in the patient's body. To cause illness, science says there must be millions of replicating virus in the patient.¹⁴ Finally, we do not know whether the RT-PCR test is testing for a virus that actually causes disease because no one has carried out the steps needed to prove causation.

Serological tests, a second type of test, are being used to detect the presence of antibodies from blood samples. However, these tests are notorious for cross-reactions and thus also have problems with false positives. In addition, antibody tests can be unreliable because they may not distinguish between various strains of human coronaviruses to which people have been exposed.¹⁵ Adding to the confusion, the WHO says that developing antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 does not mean you will not get Covid-19 a second time!¹⁶

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