



Los Alamos scientists conduct study to help predict diseases

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LOS ALAMOS, N.M., Jan. 25, 2018—Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology Directorate and the Medical Associates of Northern New Mexico are looking for volunteers in Los Alamos County to participate in a respiratory pathogen study and provide information and swab samples.

“The goal of this study is to develop a system that can predict future emergence of infections, propose the best public health solutions to prevent spread of diseases and provide suitable treatment for infections,” said Harshini Mukundan, of Los Alamos’ Physical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy group.

The study takes place at the Medical Associates of Northern New Mexico clinic, 3917 West Road, Suite A, in Los Alamos from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. The study will continue for nine months.

The team encourages participation in the study to improve the ability to predict and alleviate emerging infectious diseases and plans to analyze the efficacy of laboratory diagnostics that identify respiratory infections.

Infectious diseases in the United States and the world at large are on the rise. In addition, a rise in antibiotic-resistant bacteria is making it difficult to treat the diseases, and compelling scientists to evaluate the indiscriminate use of antibiotics.

“It is crucial to predict these diseases early and implement prevention, mitigation and therapeutic strategies in a timely manner to avoid adverse health impact on the population,” Mukundan said.

About the study

Nasal and throat swabs will be collected non-invasively from participants with minimal discomfort. Study administrators will also ask for information regarding history of respiratory infections. This collection period will continue over the next nine months and participation is voluntary.

The information is anonymized and analyzed cumulatively for the entire study, not for individuals. No individual identification data will be collected and privacy will not be compromised. Administrators will collect information regarding flu vaccination and acute respiratory infections participants may have had in the past few days, as well as gender and age-range of the individuals.

Other information

- If the participant is visiting the clinic for a regular or scheduled medical appointment, there will be no delays to the appointment.
- Nasal and/or throat samples will be collected in a private room using a swab. The process will take around five minutes.
- There is minimal to zero risk; however, some people may feel mildly uncomfortable during the swab test.
- Information on respiratory infections and flu shots will also be collected via a short 2- to 3-minute questionnaire.
- No information about chronic medical conditions or personally identifiable information will be acquired.
- After information is collated for analysis all samples and data will be destroyed.

Everyone has the right to decline participation in the study or withdraw from it during the study period. Participants will be informed of any risks, issues or concerns arising from the study. No one will contact participants to provide results of the study. Participants can acquire information from the clinic to verify the samples and data have been destroyed.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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