

# Chan Zuckerberg Biohub and UCSF boost Bay Area coronavirus testing

A new lab can process up to 2,000 samples daily and return results in as fast as 24 hours.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Dr. Priscilla Chan, said Tuesday that a new lab built by the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub and UCSF to expand coronavirus testing can process up to 2,000 samples per day and return results in as fast as 24 hours.

More than 200 researchers, graduate students and volunteers from UCSF and the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub, a medical research nonprofit funded by the couple's philanthropic initiative, put the lab together last month. The effort illustrates how the private sector is helping to speed up coronavirus testing.



The lab will offer free testing for COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus, to all nine Bay Area counties' Departments of Public Health for 30 days. Those counties are Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma. The lab tested its first samples from COVID-19 patients on March 20.

"It's an amazing example of what's possible with collaboration, quick action and everyone working towards the same goal," Chan said in a Facebook post.

In March, UCSF said it could evaluate only 60 to 100 patients per day.

On Tuesday, the couple also discussed coronavirus testing, vaccines and possible treatments with infectious disease specialist Dr. Don Ganem, a senior adviser to the biohub. During the hour-long chat, Ganem discussed three types of coronavirus screenings, including polymerase chain reaction testing to detect a virus' genetic material, a serological test to identify the antibodies produced to fight off the virus and the use of CRISPR technology.

"We're going to need to move testing away from cumbersome hospital and laboratory-based settings to the points of care, and even to these places where non-physicians might be able to do the test," Ganem said. He didn't push for doing testing at home because he's worried that people will start hoarding test kits and testing when it isn't necessary.

The use of the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine still needs to be tested in clinical trials to determine how effective it is, how well it works and what is the optimal way to use the drug, he said.

Ganem is the third expert to appear with Zuckerberg in a Facebook Live video to chat about coronavirus efforts. Previous speakers have included California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Dr. Anthony Fauci. It's part of the company's efforts to direct people to more trustworthy sources as it combats coronavirus hoaxes and misinformation. The livestreams appear on Facebook's coronavirus information center, a new hub the social network launched last month.

Outside of providing users with more accurate information, Facebook is also offering \$100 million in cash grants and ad credits to small businesses. The company has been plagued by a series of scandals since the 2016 US presidential election including around privacy, election interference and the spread of misinformation.

"I actually think that some of the mistakes we've made and the work we've done to try to fix those mistakes is serving us right now," Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg recently told The Wall Street Journal.

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