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News release

THE BIOBANQUE QUÉBÉCOISE DE LA COVID-19 CONTRIBUTES TO ADVANCES IN COVID-19'S RESEARCH

Montréal, March 2, 2021 – The clinical data and biological samples collected by the Biobanque québécoise de la COVID-19 (BQC19) provide their first results. This major discovery, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, is the outcome of a group of researchers from the Lady Davis Institution (ILD) lead Dr. Brent Richards, member of the BQC19's steering committee. Their work has identified a protective protein that mitigates the severity of COVID-19. More specifically, they discovered that higher levels of the OAS1 protein in the blood of SARS-CoV-2 infected patients who developed a severe form of COVID-19 are associated with a reduction in mortality and the need for respiratory assistance.

The research team, that also includes Dr. Michaël Chassé, Dr. Daniel Kaufmann and Dr. Vincent Mooser, also members of the BQC19' steering committee, was able to measure the levels of OAS1 in the biological samples (plasmas) of 504 BQC19' participants with different presentations of the disease and linked these measurements to the clinical data in order to perform their analyses.

This scientific progress is a concrete example of BQC19's mission and its usefulness to scientists in their COVID-19 research efforts. This discovery by Dr. Richards and his colleagues illustrates how researchers can study individuals infected with SARS-CoV-2 virus to better understand the most severe forms of COVID-19, which can improve treatment and follow-up of people with COVID-19.

For more information on the study of Dr. Brent Richards and his team

A Neanderthal OAS1 isoform protects individuals of European ancestry against COVID-19 susceptibility and severity, Sirui Zhou et coll., *Nature Medicine*,
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-021-01281-1>

About BQC19

The Biobanque québécoise de la COVID-19 (BQC19) is an initiative supported by the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé (FRQS), Génome Québec and the Public Health Agency of Canada to better understand the evolution and determinants of SARS-CoV-2 infection. The mission of the BQC19 is to ensure that scientists have access to the biological materials and data necessary for their research efforts on COVID-19, to respond effectively to the public health challenges posed by the pandemic on solid scientific bases within an appropriate ethical and legal framework.

Source

<https://publications.mcgill.ca/medenews/2021/02/26/discovery-neanderthal-derived-protein-may-reduce-the-severity-of-covid-19/>

