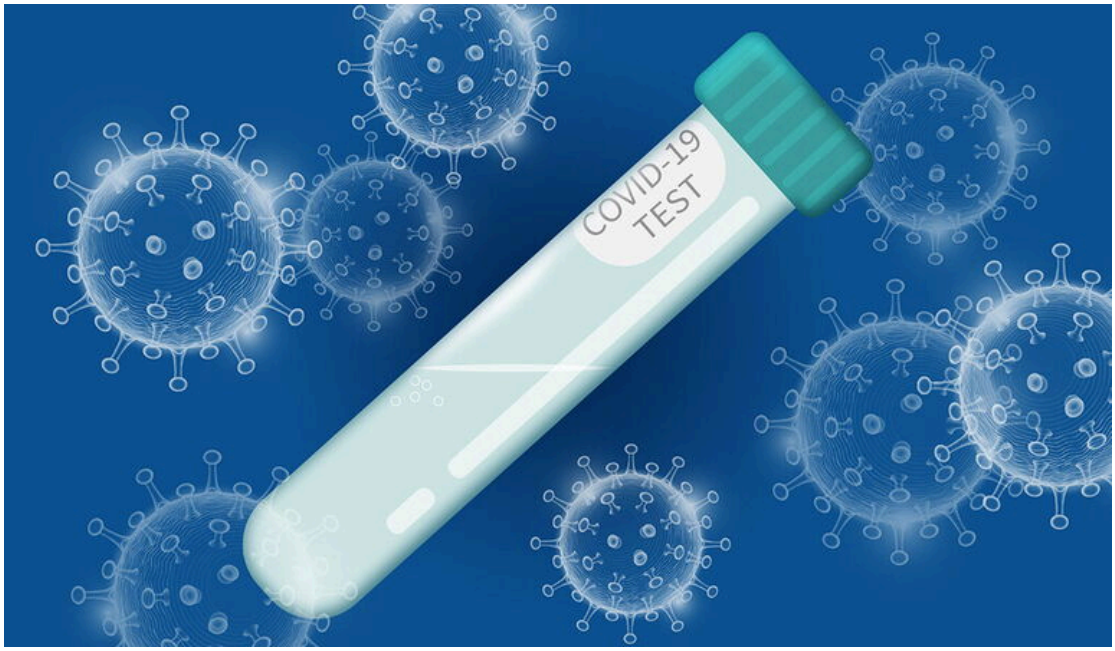
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As virus surges, Yale expands national rollout of SalivaDirect test



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BY NATALIE MISSAKIAN
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As the coronavirus rages anew across the country, Yale University has added 13 states to the national rollout of its much-anticipated SalivaDirect COVID-19 test.

Yale said Tuesday that it has now approved more than 30 independent labs in 17 states to perform the test, which has been described as a game-changer for curbing COVID-19.

Yale launched SalivaDirect at four labs in Connecticut, Florida, Minnesota and New York in September after it won emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration in August.

"I am humbled by the continued — and enthusiastic — interest in SalivaDirect from laboratories, communities and organizations big and small," said Anne Wyllie, one of two Yale School of Public Health researchers who developed the test.

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Wyllie and fellow Yale epidemiologist Nathan Grubagh say they are not looking to commercialize the test, but want it to be affordable and widely available to help curb the pandemic.

Wyllie, who is spearheading the national rollout, said she was encouraged that most labs are charging $25 or less for the test.

The test has been touted as cheaper and less invasive than many current COVID tests, which require insertion of a swab into the back of the nasal cavity.

Its creators say it is also less vulnerable to supply-chain bottlenecks. Since the saliva can be collected in any sterile container, there's no need for swabs or special collection devices. The test also eliminates a step that requires a kit prone to shortages.

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The test was used successfully this past spring in a pilot program to test asymptomatic players within the National Basketball Association.

"Each lab we have designated will enable expanded testing in their community," said Dr. Lolahon Kadiri, senior business development associate at Yale's Office of Cooperative Research. "As COVID cases are on the rise once again, there is a heightened sense of urgency."

Only specially certified high-complexity labs in the United States may offer the test. SalivaDirect is accepting applications on its website.

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