

Study of the number of COVID-19 infections among healthcare workers in Belgian hospitals

Sciensano and ITM are investigating the number of COVID-19 infections among healthcare workers in Belgian hospitals.

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Dit is de omschrijving

The study examines to what extent healthcare workers in hospitals come into contact with COVID-19. To this end the scientists will monitor 850 health workers who are representative of the health corps involved over a five-month period.

The study aims to provide answers to the following questions:

- To what extent does COVID-19 occur in healthcare workers, regardless of whether they present mild or no symptoms?
- To what extent have health professionals developed immunity / resistance to COVID-19?

"This research will provide more insight into the spread of COVID-19 among health workers in Belgian hospitals," says Dr Els Duysburgh, epidemiologist at Sciensano and coordinator of the study. "We will examine how the situation evolves over the next 5 months. It should also teach us more about the impact of the preventive measures rolled-out in the sector."

What exactly is being investigated?

The study will investigate exposure to COVID-19 in two ways:

"On the one hand, we will check whether or not the participants are carriers of the virus at the time they are tested because we know that many people show only mild or even no symptoms. We will also examine whether the participants have antibodies against the virus in their blood, which would indicate a previous COVID-19 infection, explains Dr Isabelle Desombere, immunologist at Sciensano.

"When we find such antibodies, we will also measure the number that are able to render the virus non-infectious in that person," Professor Kevin Ariën of ITM. "It tells us something about the quality of the antibodies and whether the person has built up immunity to the disease. This is important information because the earlier sufficient people develop immunity to COVID-19 the faster new infections will decrease."

"The analysis of these results and the questionnaire completed by the participants should enable us to get a good picture of the situation among healthcare workers in Belgian hospitals," Dr Duysburgh says.