



2 June 2021 – WHO and the National Institute of Health recently signed a 'letter of intent' to signal their intention to collaborate to detect severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) variants of interest and variants of concern through PCR detection and genome sequencing.

The letter of intent was signed at the WHO country office in Islamabad by Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative in Pakistan, and Major General Professor Aamer Ikram, the Executive Director of the National Institute of Health, and is a formal commitment of WHO's support to the National Reference Public Health Laboratory at the National Institute of Health and provincial laboratories.

This initiative will help rapidly identify known and emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants, track their geographical spread and ensure real time sharing of sequence data on global databases.

Dr Palitha reiterated WHO's commitment to continuing to support the National Institute in identifying variant strains and Major General Aamer Ikram thanked Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative, for his support and highlighted the efforts of the Institute in leading a national consortium for genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 variants.

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