

Preliminary conclusions, MedLife study: "Most likely the population does not have naturally gained immunity to COVID 19. Compliance with protection measures and extension of testing is our chance to operate safely and restart the economy"

The company also announces the partnership with Abbot to acquire and process over 500,000 tests for the detection of antibodies to COVID 19 by the end of the year

Bucharest, 24 April, 2020: MedLife, the leader of the Romanian private healthcare services market, announces the first conclusions of the study on the natural immunization of the population for COVID 19.

The study was conducted on a sample of 371 people, medical staff and support staff from 11 major cities where MedLife has clinics and hospitals. The subjects of the study are 90% medical staff, doctors and nurses, the remaining 10% being represented by the staff of the reception and administrative departments.

The capital has the largest share in the results of the study, of about 40%. The cities of Arad, Braşov and Sibiu each contribute with a share of 10 - 16%, while the rest of the MedLife staff, tested and interviewed, come from cities such as Piatra Neamţ, Brăila, Timișoara, Pitești, Galați, Targoviște and Ploiești.

According to company representatives, 4 test methods were used successively for this study: molecular RT-PCR method, considered gold standard for identifying SARS Cov2 virus, serological testing by Chemiluminescence method (two manufacturers with different equipment and kit: Maglumi and Yhlo respectively), and by the Elisa method, as well as rapid tests for the determination of IgM and IgG antibodies.

MedLife medical and support staff are healthy. The protection and triage measures taken by the company paid off

Preliminary results of the study conducted by MedLife show that out of the over 371 tested subjects, medical staff and its own auxiliary staff, 4 people, nurses and medical sisters from Bucharest and Arad were positively identified by RT PCR, the cases being already made public by MedLife. The 4 people detected positively by RT PCR were also confirmed by serological tests. In addition, IgG antibodies were detected for only another 1.8% of people.

"The very small number of infected medical staff and auxiliary staff confirms once again that the triage and epidemiological prevention measures implemented by MedLife have worked. We introduced telephone filters and those at the entrance to clinics, we introduced statements on own responsibility, the wearing of protective equipment by medical and support staff, preventive and systematic testing of medical staff, temperature testing at entry into units and the list can continue. All of this has helped us keep the number of infected people to a minimum and keep MedLife's medical and support staff healthy. We believe that we had a very high exposure rate of staff to the infection, higher than the general population. Among the

hundreds of thousands of patients who crossed our threshold since the onset of the pandemic, we had hundreds of patients with acute respiratory pathology, but also tens of patients who refused to sign the declaration on their own responsibility regarding travel history or contact history. We will continue to test preventively and systematically and strictly adhere to preventive measures to protect our colleagues and to provide patients with a safe environment for long-term health assessment, "said Mihai Marcu President and CEO of MedLife Group.

Serological tests, recommended as a complementary method to RT-PCR testing for serological screening and verification of the immune response in large populations. Rapid tests are insufficiently validated

The study data show that the results of serological tests confirmed in a very high proportion the results of RT-PCR tests. Thus, all 4 people detected positively by RT PCR, deliberately entered in the sample to verify the method, were confirmed by serological tests. In addition, IgG antibodies were detected for another 7 people, respectively 1.8% of the total of 371 subjects tested.

According to the same study, rapid tests have a lower accuracy and may prove ineffective in the clinical context of patients. It is also necessary to specify that absolutely all the people tested except for the 4 detected positively by RT PCR were asymptomatic at the date of performing the tests. In this regard, the temperature and any other symptoms specific to acute respiratory infections were tested.

"The fact that the results of serological tests coincided in a very large proportion with those of RT-PCR tests, being two totally different methods of approaching the infection, is an additional proof of the quality of the human factor and equipment used in our laboratories. RT-PCR testing remains the gold standard for the diagnosis of SARS Cov2 virus infection as it has a very high degree of accuracy and detects the infection as soon as possible after exposure. Equally, this study showed us that serological tests have a high accuracy and precision. They can be successfully used for epidemiological surveillance by serological testing of healthcare professionals and can be extended to large populations, especially isolated ones, to assess the immune response due to inapparent or clinically apparent natural infection, and in conjunction with RT-PCR to establish the final diagnosis" said Mihai Marcu.

The percentage of the population immunized for COVID 19 at the level of the evaluated sample from various regions of the country is very small. Protective measures and the extension of testing represent Romania's chance to operate safely and restart the economy

The study conducted by MedLife also shows that the percentage of the population naturally immunized for COVID 19 in the sample assessed in various regions of the country is very small. Also, there is a percentage of about 1% of asymptomatic people who were identified only with positive IgG antibodies, and who at some point could have been infected and could have transmitted the infection to others.

"Given the rather large number of employees tested and their good territorial distribution, as well as the fact that they had extensive social contact, respectively interacted with family members, went shopping for food, went daily from work at home, some of them using public transport, show that their profile is not totally different from that of ordinary people. Therefore, most likely, the Romanian population does not have yet specific immunity for COVID 19", Mihai Marcu also declared.

At the same time, the study highlighted the fact that despite the high contagion, already recognized, once the prevention and protection measures are observed, the spread rate of the virus decreases rapidly. These conclusions are complemented by the data accumulated from the experience of the two MedLife maternity hospitals.

„The population of Romania and probably of Europe is not naturally immunized on a large scale, the proportion of people with seroconverts being still small. If a group of active people, who go to clinics and hospitals and who have daily contact with patients has not acquired immunity then it is likely that the percentage of Romanians immunized nationally is very small. Thus, it turns out that by observing the individual protection measures, the risk of interhuman transmission of SARS CoV 2 infection is significantly reduced. In the medium and long term, an important chance for Romania to operate safely and to revive the economy could be represented by the extension of testing and strict compliance with prevention measures. In the short term, even public hospitals and outpatient clinics, especially companies that do not work with the public, such as factories, can also become safer environments if they take safety measures, if they disinfect, filter, monitor symptoms such as temperature, and periodically tests its staff ", said Mihai Marcu.

MedLife has signed an agreement with Abbot to purchase more than 500,000 tests for IgG antibodies. The company also announces that it has the capacity to process up to 1 million serum tests for the detection of IgG and IgM antibodies and up to 350,000 RT PCR tests by the end of the year.

As a result of the study, the company's representatives are convinced that serological testing on large populations could be a reliable solution, which will help Romania to restart its economy.

"Serological testing for antibodies is viable. This means that a much larger number of medical staff can be tested quickly and at lower costs. Moreover, this testing can be extended to the population, especially in relatively isolated areas, respectively among people at low risk of contact. In this way, by determining IgM antibodies, epidemiological investigations and RT-PCR testing can be quickly initiated in the identified outbreaks. We must not forget that it is possible for patients identified with IgG to have longer-term immunity, but we can only prove this by periodically testing patients in the coming months. We strongly believe that serological testing can be widely used to guide diagnosis, being a method with important implications in assessing the prevalence of SARS CoV 2 infection and, in addition, could help to develop strategies to relax social distancing measures and implicitly in the relaunch of the Romanian economy ", declared Mihai Marcu.

"We hereby announce that we have already signed an agreement with Abbot to purchase and process over 500,000 tests in our laboratories to detect antibodies to COVID 19, with a total processing capacity of 1 million tests by the end of the year. We will test our medical and non-medical staff, employees of partner companies to help them resume their business safely, we will go to exposed communities and we will test even on request. In situations where we identify outbreaks, we will perform RT PCR tests. We have a chance to restart the economy and, as a market leader, we want to support fighting the pandemic. We can process up to 350,000 RT PCR tests and up to 1 million serum tests for antibodies if there is need. Until the information on the level of protection provided by antibodies acquired after natural infection is elucidated, we draw attention to the strict observance of protection measures, including by persons who

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are detected with positive anti-SARS CoV-2 IgG antibodies. As I said before, the isolation measures taken by the authorities have been extraordinarily good, with a small number of people infected at national level compared to other countries. Even this study shows that the Romanian population has acquired almost no immunity. In this way, we want to call on the population to isolate themselves, to stay at home if possible and to protect themselves in full compliance with the provisions of the Government, the Presidency, the ministries and agencies involved. The fact that our data show a reduced risk of SARS CoV 2 infection among individuals analyzed by observing individual protection measures, and the prevalence is lower than initially estimated, is in no way a call to the population to protect themselves less and no recommendation to any authority to lift the restrictions imposed in the last 2 months. The state institutions have the aggregated information at national level and are the only ones able to decide in a situation of such magnitude", Mihai Marcu also said.

The study for the evaluation of the natural immunization of the population took place between March 24 and April 21, among its own medical and auxiliary staff, being the first project under study conducted by MedLife on such a large scale. In the future, the company intends to replicate the study on more exposed cohorts in order to more accurately determine the time difference in infection identification between PCR and the appearance of IgM and IgG antibodies.

"We will expand this study by doing it in dynamics including IgM and IgG values detected both for patients confirmed with positive PCR and for other subjects with undetectable PCR to get a clearer picture of the rate of antibody in case of infections with the new coronavirus, as well as their persistence of medium and long-term immunity" concluded Mihai Marcu.

Preliminary conclusions of the market research study

SAMPLE PROFILE

The research results are representative for all Medlife employees whose activity involves contact with patients, from 11 most important cities where the group has clinics or hospitals. Employees who interrupted or suspended their collaboration with Medlife during the state of emergency for various reasons (eg technical unemployment) were excluded from the universe. Thus, a sample of 371 respondents answered a series of questions related to their lifestyle during the COVID period.

Doctors, nurses are the professional categories with the highest share in the total sample (approximately 90% of which approx. 30% doctors, approx. 50% nurses, approx. 10% medical sisters), the remaining 10% being represented by the staff from reception and administrative departments.

The capital has the largest share in the research results, of approx. 40%. The cities of Arad, Brasov and Sibiu each contribute with a share of 10 - 16%, while the rest of the Medlife staff interviewed come from cities such as Piatra Neamt, Braila, Timisoara, Pitesti, Galati, Targoviste, Ploiesti.

MedLife employees whose activity involves interpersonal interaction came into contact with 25 people, on average, per day, of which two thirds were patients.

Even if during COVID, after the state of emergency was declared, the number of contacts in the hospital / clinic was halved in all segments analyzed - doctors, nurses, reception, administrative staff - the exposure of Medlife staff is significant and probably well above the values recorded among the general population.

The most exposed was the reception staff - 44 contacts per day, of which approx. 80% patients. Nurses and administrative staff interacted daily, on average, with 26 to 27 people, two-thirds of whom were patients. Doctors, on the other hand, stand out with the lowest exposure - 15 people on average per day, of which half are patients.

Medlife's medical and non-medical staff exposure and, implicitly, the risk of infection are significant and probably superior to the general population. Both contexts, both professional and private, reflect a socially active individual.

The incidence of social contacts - relatives, friends or other people outside the hospital / clinic or household - is high, capturing the voluntary activities offered by respondents who provided medical help to relatives and friends and made supplies for relatives and friends.

Weekly, Medlife staff is engaged in 2 other types of activities outside home, the most common being shopping, either from small shops near the home (approx. 60%), or from large stores of super- or hyper-market type (about 50%). The behavior of providing care / assistance to other people is more accentuated among doctors (22% versus 9% the percentage registered in the rest of Medlife staff). Only 15% go out in the vicinity of the house to carry out a physical activity (eg running, gymnastics, walking).

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The vast majority of interviewed Medlife staff travel to the hospital / clinic by personal car (63%), while 20% of staff use public transportation.

The appropriate protective measures put in place by Medlife group rigorously not only protected Medlife patients and staff against COVID 19, but strengthened the sense of control among employees, who felt less vulnerable to the virus.

Almost all respondents state that their health is very good (approx. 60%) or good (approx. 35%). However, the attitude towards the virus in terms of vulnerability is strongly polarized - 30% acknowledge their vulnerability mainly due to the contagiousness of the virus, 34% have a neutral position. The remaining 36% feel rather that they have or can have control over the disease, mainly invoking the protection measures in the hospital, to which is added the optimism regarding both the state of health and the rate of contagion of the virus.

The study was conducted by MedLife in 3 laboratories in the group: the MedLife central laboratory in Bucharest, the Panduri Medical Center Laboratory and the Sfânta Maria laboratory.

Laboratory team coordinator: Dr. Roxana Vasilescu, primary doctor of laboratory medicine, Head of MedLife Grivița Laboratory.

Scientific support provided by: Dr. Valeriu Gheorghiu primary doctor Infectious Diseases, PhD in Medicine, University Assistant UMF Dr. Carol Davila, Central Military Emergency University Hospital Dr. Carol Davila and Dr. Mihai Vârciu, primary endocrinologist, PhD in Medicine, Lecturer at University Transilvania Brașov.

On the methodology and sampling side, the study was supervised by Andi Dumitrescu, consultant and market research expert with over 20 years of experience. Mr. Dumitrescu led the company GfK Romania, which has been the leader of the last 20 years of the market research industry.