

The Role of Viral Diagnostic Tests in Respiratory Tract Infections: Moving Forward

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BACKGROUND

A multidisciplinary team of six Spanish international experts gathered to evaluate the role of molecular diagnostic tests in the management of respiratory infections in Spain. Their evaluation considered the February 2023 publication of Spanish recommendations on managing influenza as well as English references on respiratory infections.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An accurate diagnostic procedure for respiratory tract infections (RTI), where viruses can be precisely diagnosed, **improves care performance and patient outcomes.**
- In the hospital setting, **molecular tests are recommended over antigen tests for the management of adult patients.** Consequently, all admitted patients, especially those on oxygen therapy, immunocompromised, or with comorbidities, should undergo molecular testing.
- In outpatient care, although medical-economic evidence still must be provided, **molecular tests may be effective if transfer to another hospital or targeted therapy is needed.**
- **Antigen tests are not recommended within the first 48 hours** of respiratory symptoms due to their lower negative predictive value, as testing with it could negatively impact treatment, especially in hospitalised patients.
- For a test to be fully implemented, it should cover more than 50% of potential etiological pathogens and **include targets for more than 2 viruses to be considered credible.**
- Viral testing for RTI patients **informs therapeutic decisions, improves antibiotic use, and enables targeted antiviral therapy.**

INSIGHTS

- This consensus paper supports the use of molecular testing for respiratory diseases, highlighting its superiority over antigen testing in Spain.
- The expert panel was multidisciplinary and internationally recognised and will support national guideline updates.



Reference: Ortíz de Lejarazu R, Eiros JM, López-Medrano F, Montes M, Tagarro A, Tomás M. The role of viral diagnostic tests in respiratory tract infections: moving forward. Rev Esp Quimioter. 2024 Jun;37(3):252-256. doi: 10.37201/req/150.2023. Epub 2024 Apr 12. PMID: 38606841; PMCID: PMC11094630.

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