Thai specialists from Mahidol University introduce cheaper, faster COVID-19 tests

By **Pattaya Mail** April 26, 2020

The medical science experts said the new solution is faster and more efficient with the RT-LAMP technology to test patients' saliva for results.
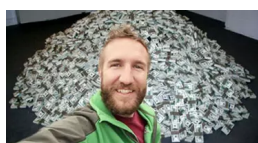
BANGKOK – Mahidol University has announced a cheaper and faster way to test coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection by using patients' saliva.

Dr Opat Kankawinpong, director-general of the Department of Medical Sciences, Palangpon Kongsaeree, dean of the Faculty of Science at Mahidol University, and Dr Piyamit Sritara, dean of the Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, said the new solution used RT-LAMP technology to test patients' saliva. The technique was used to test 200 saliva samples, of which 182 tested positive for COVID-19 and the rest negative.

The technique was faster and more efficient than using swabs to collect samples from nasal passage which hurt patients and caused them to cough and thus transmit the disease. Tests also found that salivary glands could contract COVID-19, they said.
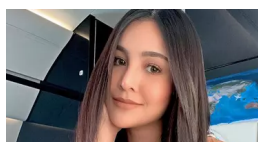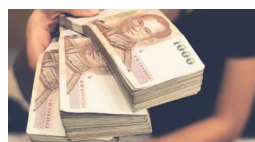
Tests with RT-LAMP technology require patients to spit saliva into collection cups containing preservative. A test in a laboratory takes only 45 minutes to produce a result. The cost of the technique is five times cheaper than a conventional test. Thailand has used the COVID-19 RT-PCR tests that are time-consuming and costly.

The faculties of science and medicine of Mahidol University have presented the new technique to seek financial aid worth 30.9 million baht to produce 50,000 RT-LAMP test kits for the government. The new test kits will be ready for use next week. (*TNA*)