

Chinese company targets global sales with quick COVID-19 tests

September 29 2020, by Ludovic Ehret



The Flash 20 is about the size of a desktop printer

A Chinese company is entering the global race to help defeat the coronavirus, promising its testing machine will return results faster than a lab and more reliably than at-home screening kits.

The Flash 20 "is currently the fastest machine in the world for PCR tests for the new coronavirus", says Sabrina Li, founder of the company Coyote.

PCR tests are the industry standard and a major weapon against a pandemic that has now killed more than a million people and eviscerated the [global economy](#).

As governments scramble to develop adequate response systems, Li is targeting global sales.

Already used at hospitals and airports in China, the contraption can process four samples in one go and deliver results in just half an hour.

It has been certified by the European Union and Australia, and Coyote is seeking similar status from the United States and World Health Organization.

Testing has been hailed as one of the best weapons to contain the pandemic and other researchers are also on the quest to find the fastest method.

On Monday US President Donald Trump announced the distribution of 150 million rapid coronavirus tests that can deliver a result in 15-30 minutes.

Different to PCR tests, these rapid diagnostic kits offer a quick turnaround, but are less sensitive and more likely to return [false negatives](#).



A technician takes a sample from a staff member at Chinese biotech company Coyote

The makers of the Flash 20 say their machine, about the size of a printer, is not only fast but extremely reliable.

Past experience with major disease outbreaks helped Coyote respond quickly this time around, the company said.

The SARS epidemic of 2003-2004 jolted China's biotechnology sector and led to a great "reorganisation" in the way the industry works, Zang Yuepeng, Coyote's technical manager responsible for the Flash 20, told AFP.

So when COVID-19 emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, Coyote was able to design the machine and "very quickly put this product on the market".

Between February and July, 500,000 tests were carried out in China by the authorities using the Flash 20, and the results were 97 percent the same as those returned by conventional PCR testing in a lab.

The company can currently produce only 500 a month but is hoping to double that number by the end of the year.

The main challenge, Coyote said, will be making enough [machines](#) to meet what it hopes will be huge demand.

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