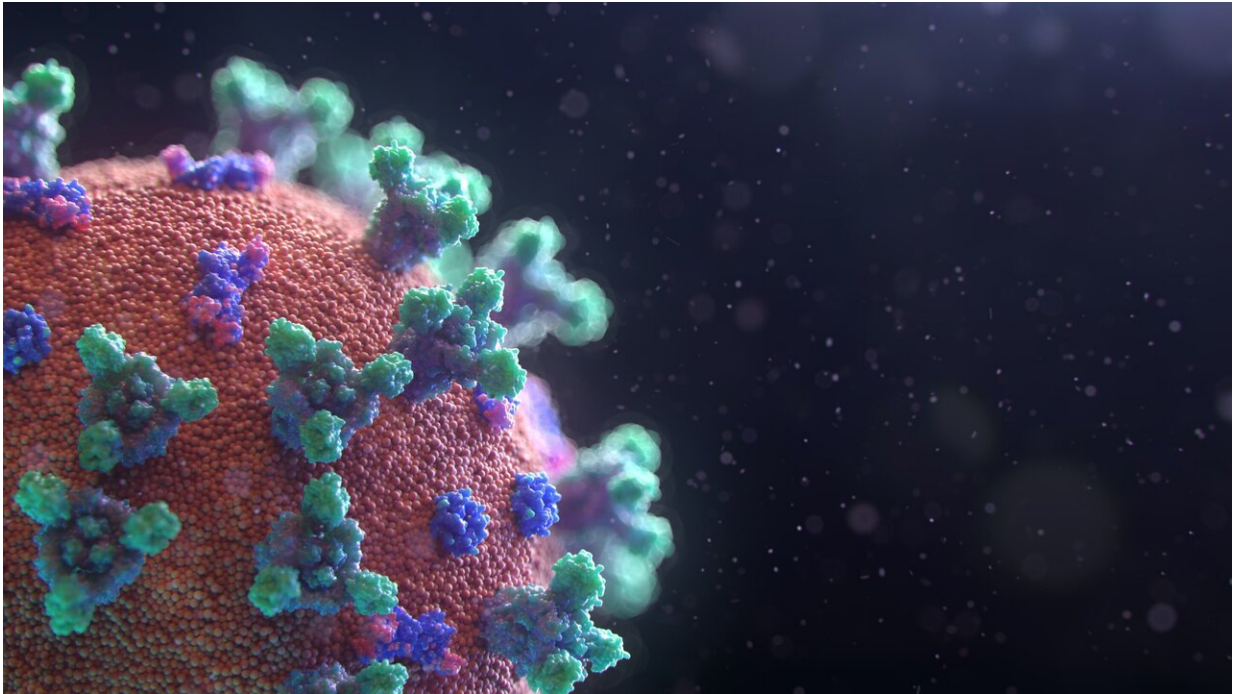


Swiss to host global virus hub laboratory

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Switzerland signed a deal with the World Health Organization on Monday to host a global repository for viruses with pandemic potential to bolster international defences against emerging threats.

The BioHub laboratory will store and analyse pathogens from across the globe and enhance the rapid sharing of information between labs around the world.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said it would be a "reliable, safe, and transparent mechanism for member states to voluntarily share pathogens and clinical samples".

The memorandum of understanding was signed at the WHO's headquarters in Geneva, as the UN health agency kicked off its annual main assembly of member states.

The facility will be hosted at the Swiss defence ministry's biological safety laboratories in the lakeside town of Spiez.

"Close international collaboration to ensure the timely sharing of epidemiological and clinical data as well as [biological materials](#) is of utmost importance," Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset told the World Health Assembly.

"We hope to contribute to the establishment of an international exchange system for SARS-CoV-2 and other emerging pathogens."

Currently, most pathogen sharing is done between [individual countries](#) in an ad hoc way, which can be slow and leave some states out of the loop.

The BioHub will allow the WHO's 194 member states to share biological materials with the facility under pre-agreed conditions to ensure timeliness and predictability when responding to potential outbreaks.

"The COVID-19 pandemic and other outbreaks and epidemics have underscored the importance of rapidly sharing pathogens to help the global scientific community assess the risk and develop counter-measures such as diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines," said Tedros.

"The BioHub system is an important step towards facilitating this flow of information."

A pilot scheme using the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 will test whether it is feasible to share biological materials with manufacturers for the development of medical products for even allocation among countries.

"Following results from the [pilot project](#), the BioHub will expand from SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, to other pathogens, and connect partners with other repositories and laboratory networks in 2022," the WHO said in a statement.

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