



Alpha Helix

Press Release

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Record-quick DNA analysis weapon against Bird Flu

The biotech company AlphaHelix in Uppsala, Sweden (partly owned by Affärsstrategerna), has developed a new method for DNA identification. The method, which is currently the quickest in the world, was developed together with Uppsala University. In the case of viruses, such as avian influenza (bird flu), the method's inherent speed means that it is possible to begin appropriate treatment immediately, thereby restraining further infection.

"When it comes to viral diseases, it is important to be able to carry out a fast analysis to reduce further infection. With our method it is possible to produce a complete DNA analysis in one hour and fifteen minutes", commented Mats Malmqvist, Managing Director for AlphaHelix Molecular Diagnostics AB.

Bird flu, which to date has mainly affected South-East Asia and Russia, has now also reached Europe. Several hundred people have been infected and 60+ people have died. There is a risk that the virus, H5N1, will mutate and begin to spread globally. According to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), if this happens there is a risk that seven million people could die within a matter of months.

To reduce the risk of infection and to be able to carry out early treatment it is first necessary to determine whether a virus is dangerous or not. Using AlphaHelix's method – triplex-qPCR – it is possible to generate a positive/negative result after just 25 minutes. Five minutes after this it is possible to see how serious the infection is. After an additional 45 minutes DNA-sequence information can be compared with databases via the internet in order to chart the spread of the disease.

"Using alternative methods, similar results can only be generated, at the earliest, the day after the initial test is taken. Our analysis method is able to save valuable time", said Mats Malmqvist.

AlphaHelix developed the instrument, which together with the aid of DNA technology is able to identify viruses. The method itself has been developed by Professor Jonas Blomberg at Uppsala University and Sandor Belak at SVA (Swedish Veterinary Institute).

"What is revolutionary and speeds up this process is that we can look at three different types of flu viruses simultaneously", explained Professor Blomberg.

AlphaHelix sees a number of other areas where this analysis method could be applied. One such area is terrorist activity in the form of biological warfare, where a fast analysis could expedite protection against the spread of infection via food stuffs. The Uppsala company also believes the method could be used to gain quick results when testing for HIV.

AlphaHelix Molecular Diagnostics AB is owned by Affärsstrategerna (44%), founders Mats and Stig Malmqvist (36%), Nicke Svanvik (8%) and 50+ smaller stakeholders.

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Affärsstrategerna was founded in 1988 and was quoted on the Stockholm Stock Exchange O-List in 1998. Over the years, Affärsstrategerna has invested capital and knowledge in approximately fifty companies. Life Science is a prioritised investment area. Furthermore, Affärsstrategerna acquires profitable and mature companies in stable business sectors.