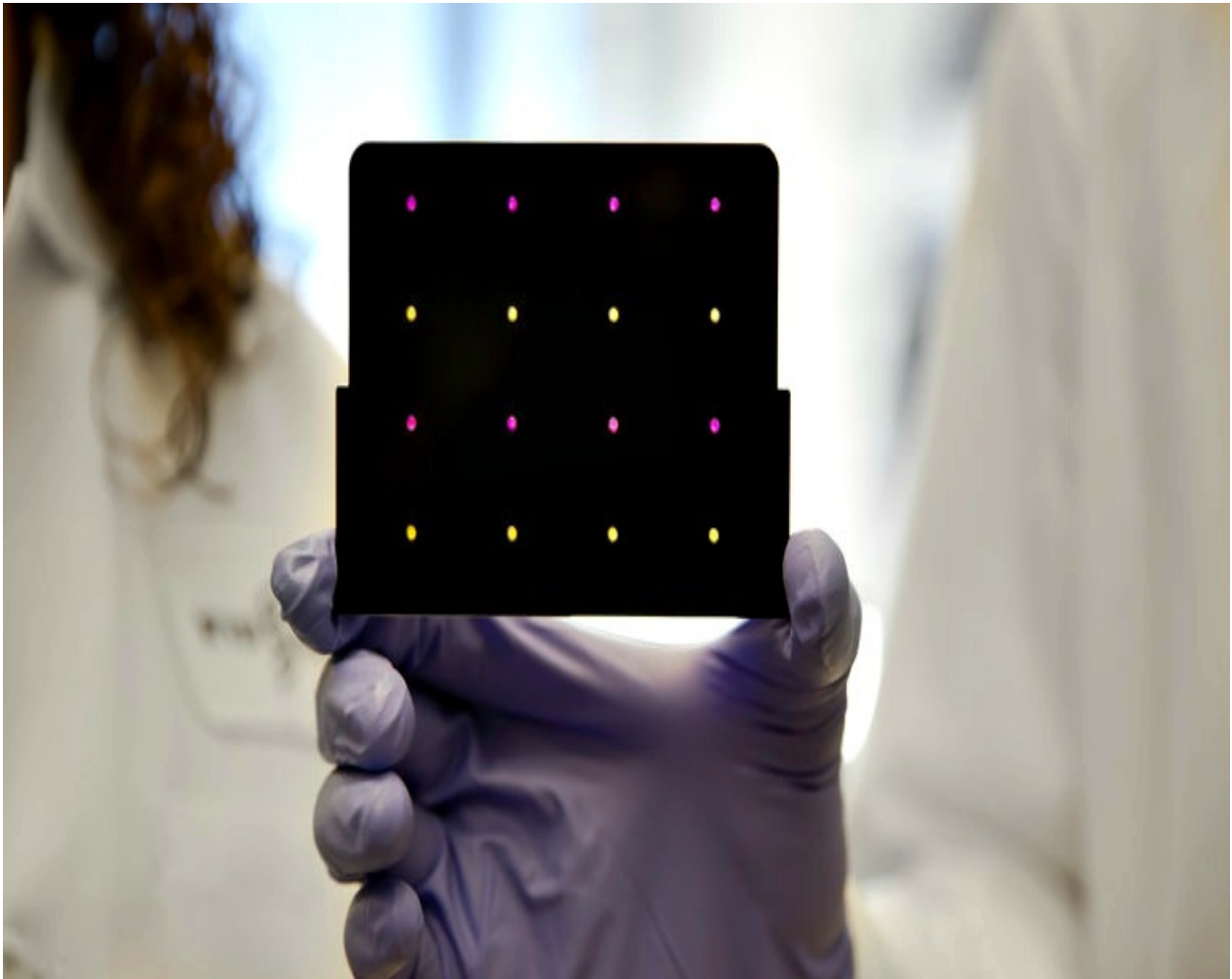


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Researchers Introduce Rapid Zika Test

Health / **Published On May 09, 2016 11:14 AM /**

Staff **May 09, 2016**



A group of researchers on Friday introduced a paper-based rapid test for the Zika virus, according to the New York Times.

The core of the test kit is a piece of paper covered with yellow dots that turn purple in the presence of Zika virus RNA (ribonucleic acid). The test, although relatively fast and simple, requires preliminary heating to amplify a sample's RNA, which can be done in most laboratories, according to the report.

The test, which gives results in two to three hours, "is much faster and cheaper than the P.C.R. tests used now," said James J. Collins, a bioengineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who is one of the test designers.

University of Toronto biochemist Keith Pardee said it should cost less than \$1 per test.

Dr. Collins took a cell's normal reproductive "machinery" — including proteins, nucleic acids and ribosomes — and freeze-dried it on paper. The work was described in the journal *Cell*.

The color change can be read by the eye or by an extra-sensitive scanner that may eventually be able to measure viral loads in the blood sample.

The test has worked on Zika-infected monkey blood, which was used because human samples were hard to obtain in time. Now, Dr. Collins said, "we're talking with groups in Colombia and Brazil about testing it in the field."

The collaboration also included scientists from Harvard's Wyss Institute, the Broad Institute, Cornell, Arizona State and Boston University.

Feature Image: A paper-based test can diagnose a Zika virus infection within a few hours.

Image Credit: Wyss Institute at Harvard University, via NY Times.