

Venter lab, Novartis to synthesize new bird flu genes

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Singapore: The J Craig Venter Institute (JCVI) and Synthetic Genomics Vaccines (SGVI), US, are working with Novartis to synthesize the genes of the new viral strain of bird flu (H7N9) that has recently emerged in China. The initiative was taken by the two institutes following a request from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

The H7N9 flu virus gene sequences have been recently made publicly available through the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAID). The synthesized genes would then be supplied to the CDC. The early availability of these synthetic genes could more rapidly and effectively assist in a global response to an emerging flu strain.

"SGVI, JCVI and Novartis are closely following the situation in China and are engaged in dialogue with the appropriate global organizations to aid the situation as it evolves," said Dr Venter, CEO and founder, JCVI and CEO, founder and chairman, Synthetic Genomics.