

Parvovirus B19 Diagnostic Test Kit

Hematology Branch of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, NIH

Dr. Neal Young, of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, NIH discovered parvovirus B19 capsids that were instrumental in the development of the first and only FDA approved parvovirus B19 Diagnostic Test Kit. Parvovirus B19 (B19V) is the causative agent of the relatively benign childhood disease, erythema infections (fifth's Disease). The B19 infection is pregnancy is often overlooked simply because most infected pregnant women are asymptomatic (show no symptoms) or they have a mild manifestation of B19, such as slight itching. Pregnant women (in the first and second trimesters) with the B19V infection can give rise to serious fetal complications during pregnancy. Up to 50% of women have not been exposed to the virus and thus are susceptible to parvovirus B19 infection. The B19 infection may result in anemia, pregnancy miscarriage and/or hydrops fetalis. Early diagnosis of B19V infection will identify those at risk and may allow for early intervention therapy, thereby improving fetal survival. Patients who are immunocompromised (e.g., receiving chemotherapy or immunosuppressive drugs or have immune deficits) may develop chronic B19V infection that causes chronic anemia. Dr. Young has also recently discovered that a transient aplastic crisis of sickle cell disease and chronic arthropathy/arthritis, especially in middle-aged women with fifth disease, was due to the B19 virus. However, many people with parvovirus infections show no symptoms at all. People may simply be tired or have flu-like symptoms. Therefore the only way to know if a person has parvovirus B19 infection is to have a test for it using this NIH developed diagnostic test kit. Appropriate patient management is dependent on accurate B19V diagnosis, thus screening patients for B19V antibody status will determine the need for further medical follow-up and/or intervention.

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