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‘All of Us’ Program Debuts Researcher ‘Workbench,’ to Conduct COVID-19 Tests

NIH has opened its “initial data set and tools” in its All of Us research program to investigators under a new beta model that does not allow downloading of information. And on June 16, the program announced that it will conduct COVID-19 antibody tests on samples from “10,000 or more participants who joined the program most recently, starting with samples from March 2020 and working backward until positive tests are no longer found.” The goal is to “show the prevalence of novel coronavirus exposure among All of Us participants, and help researchers assess varying rates across regions and communities.” The All of Us program is part of a precision medicine initiative launched by President Obama that began recruitment just two years ago, with the goal of enrolling a million individuals. Some 350,000 have become involved to date; of the total, data from 225,000 is now accessible to researchers, according to CEO Josh Denny.

Last month Denny announced the availability of the program’s “researcher workbench,” calling it an “important step in our effort to accelerate new discoveries.” He noted that the platform has “key limitations,” including that not all “variables” are available for all participants, and said access will come with certain safeguards, such as a preregistration, a data use agreement and a requirement that researchers “analyze data within the secure cloud-based All of Us platform.” The program is seeking researcher feedback on the workbench so that it can make improvements, he added. The new testing effort is an example of how the program itself is “leveraging its significant and diverse participant base” to help combat the pandemic and “enable the research community to answer some of today’s most critical questions and inform future preparedness efforts,” Denny said. In addition to the COVID-19 testing, the program has implemented a new online survey “designed both for participants who have been ill with COVID-19 and those who have not, and includes questions on COVID-19 symptoms, stress, social distancing and economic impacts,” program officials said in the announcement. “Participants are invited to take the survey each month until the pandemic ends, so researchers can study the effects of COVID-19 over time and better understand how and why COVID-19 affects people differently.”

[Link to researcher workbench announcement](#)

[Link to COVID-19 testing announcement](#)

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