How GMO and CRISPR gene-edited plants are playing key roles in developing coronavirus vaccines and treatments

Questions about the origin of the COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2) were raised, and some even speculated that the virus is a product of genetic engineering. In a *Nature Medicine* article, scientists from the US, UK, and Australia reported that the genome sequence of the COVID-19 virus evolved naturally erasing the popular myth.

Similar to other viruses, the COVID-19 virus spreads through droplets of saliva or nasal discharge. Infected individuals experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and can recover without medications. However, older patients with underlying medical concerns such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, and chronic respiratory disease are more likely to develop serious illness.

Thus, scientists from various fields all over the world are working hard to come up with effective treatments to curb the pandemic.

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**Diagnostics: Test Kits Using CRISPR and Algae**  

COVID-19 testing is conducted through various means in different countries.

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Western University and Suncor are developing serological test kits for COVID-19 using algae as a production factory for making the vital proteins for antibody identification.

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**Vaccines: Using Plants as Biofactories**  

Vaccines are known to be the most cost-effective and efficacious method to lessen the disease burden of infectious diseases. Thus, experts are striving towards developing an effective vaccine to combat the spread of COVID-19. This includes plant-derived vaccines, which can be produced with less cost in high amounts, carrier plants are readily accepted by patients and antigens derived from them are stable and can be stored for a long time.

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