

Sona Nanotech is seeking U.S. FDA approval for its rapid COVID-19 saliva test

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Much to my chagrin, it appears this damn COVID virus is refusing to let us be. I guess one positive take-away is that we are learning about the Greek alphabet. I can't say I was familiar with omicron prior to last Thursday, but all of a sudden it's the most talked about Greek letter in the world. Along those lines it would appear we aren't going to shed this virus anytime soon (pun intended), so we are going to have to adapt to it so we can get back to as normal a lifestyle as possible. In my opinion, an easy to administer, reliable rapid test could go a long way towards returning us to our normal day-to-day activities while still giving confidence to all those around us that they are in a safe environment. Obviously, it would have to be more convenient than the one where it seems like they are trying to swab brain tissue behind your eyes, because I know I certainly won't be signing up to do that every day or two. But a simple saliva swab in the mouth, and 15 minutes later you've got the green light to do whatever, seems like a reasonable solution.

There are a lot of companies out there that are pursuing this holy grail of a reliable rapid test, but the one I want to talk about today is developing a saliva-based rapid screening test, for Coronavirus, derived from a bunch of other interesting applications for their technology. The company is [Sona Nanotech Inc.](#) (CSE: SONA | OTCQB: SNANF), and they have developed multiple proprietary methods for the manufacture of various types of gold nanoparticles and are experienced in the

development of rapid, lateral flow assay, in-vitro, diagnostic tests. The Company is also involved in research and development into other potential applications for its proprietary technologies.

What makes Sona (the Hindi word for gold) unique is that it has patented, **non-toxic**, metallic gold nanorods (GNRs) which are small particles whose surface plasmon resonance (SPR) frequencies can be altered by modifying their length and width, giving them properties useful in a host of applications, including diagnostics, optical biomedical imaging, and photothermal therapies, to name a few. I recognize that's a lot of science stuff but the key term in the last sentence to focus on is non-toxic. One of the major barriers in the application of GNR based materials is the presence of cetrimonium bromide (CTAB), a cytotoxin. After years of hard work, Sona was able to perfect the process and develop the ability to synthesize large volumes of high-quality gold nanorods free of CTAB. This opened the door to using GNRs as a drug delivery vehicle and for photothermal therapy.

If you check out the [Sona Nanotech](#) website there is some pretty fascinating stuff, even if I don't understand a bunch of it. However, we'll focus on the investment thesis for today. It should be somewhat obvious that a rapid COVID test is what is of greatest importance right now. On November 8th the Company announced a U.S. partnership and preliminary evaluation results for its [COVID-19 saliva test](#). Sona entered into a binding licensing agreement with U.S. FDA registered Arlington Scientific Inc. of Springville, Utah, to bring Sona's rapid saliva COVID-19 test to market. The market was pretty excited about this news as the stock popped 87% the day after the press release, and that was before anyone was aware of the COVID omicron variant. If an FDA Emergency Use Authorization is

granted, Arlington will coordinate manufacturing and distribution of the test in the U.S. exclusively on a profit-sharing basis. In other words, Arlington will make it and market it, meaning almost zero cost for Sona to move the product forward (Sona is on the hook for providing key biological materials for testing). This is a very important deal for a company that currently has no revenue and is pretty much focused on R&D.

There are plenty of other developments going on at Sona like a concussion test for mild traumatic brain injury that aims to detect a series of biomarkers enabling the screening for mild concussions, and a bovine tuberculosis test, which is being developed with a consortium of companies as part of a Canada/UK industrial research and development program. Both of which could be future sources of income for the Company but not likely on the scale of a rapid COVID test. Another interesting application of their technology is a possible advancement of radiation therapy in cancer cells by focusing on the treatment. Evidence suggests that GNRs could be more effective at killing tumors with less or no adverse reactions to healthy cells given that traditional methods of this type of treatment involve non-selective irradiation, damaging the normal tissue surrounding a tumor. Although maybe we'll save the discussion of these applications for another day.

For now, Sona could be in the right place at the right time. After some initial missteps, they have fine-tuned their rapid, saliva, COVID-19 test just in time for the next variant of concern to come along. With just over 65 million shares outstanding they have a market cap of roughly C\$28 million based on yesterday's close. A near-term catalyst could prove to be a better shot in the arm for Sona Nanotech than any vaccine.

StageZero Saliva PCR Test, a potential game changer for replacing the nasal probe

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Nobody likes a COVID-19 nasal swab test that pushes a probe way up into your nose nearly reaching your brain. [StageZero Life Sciences Ltd.](#) (TSX: SZLS) ('StageZero') has released a COVID-19 saliva PCR test in the USA which is so much more easier and more comfortable to do. It can even be mailed to you and done at your home.

In [news](#) just released yesterday, StageZero released their new COVID-19 Saliva PCR test in the USA and Canada. Since May 2020, StageZero has been offering nasopharyngeal swab-based PCR tests and serology tests for COVID-19. The good news is that StageZero has now added a saliva test and will shortly introduce an antigen test and a full viral respiratory panel to its test offering. The test is FDA approved under the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) clearance. All the patient has to do is simply fill a tube with their own saliva, label it, and send it to the StageZero lab for testing.

COVID-19 PCR test – Uncomfortable nasal swab versus simple saliva testing



[Source](#)

Chairman and CEO of StageZero, James Howard-Tripp, [says](#): “Every

COVID testing lab, and Government, is striving to make testing more accessible and easier to do. Saliva as a specimen, done correctly, is scientifically as accurate as swabs but easier to collect and allows us to reach patients at home.”

Back in May when StageZero first introduced the nasal swab tests I [wrote](#) about the massive worldwide demand for COVID-19 testing. I quoted a [report](#) by Harvard University stating that the US needs to be able to test 5 million people per day to safely begin to reopen their economy by June 2020. That was when there were only 30,000 new cases per day in the USA.

Fast forward to today and there are now about [45,000](#) new COVID-19 cases per day in the US, and about 1 million new COVID-19 tests performed every day. But really the need for testing remains much higher.

US daily COVID-19 tests tracker by John Hopkins – About 1 million tests per day



[Source](#)

StageZero will continue to offer a selection of COVID-19 testing summarized as:

- Salvia PCR tests to detect the SARS-CoV-2 RNA and then sent to the StageZero Virginia lab for results processing. Ideal for very early stage detection.
- Antigen testing for immediate results. This works by testing if a patient has developed antibodies to COVID-19. It is best for the rapid screening of symptomatic patients.
- A Respiratory Panel PCR-based test for 18 viruses and two respiratory bacteria. It will screen for Influenza A,

Influenza B, RSV and SARS-CoV-2 infection.

StageZero now offers a complete range of COVID-19 tests at a time when demand for testing is enormous. My view is that patient's will be much more willing to undergo a saliva test than the previous nasal swab testing, as well as the possibility of completing a test from home. It is also much more suitable for people in remote areas.

Looking ahead in the very near term, StageZero will commence an offering with their revolutionary [Aristotle®](#) screening test for 10 cancers from a single sample of blood. You can read more about that [here](#).

Following the recent [share consolidation](#) StageZero will now "prepare for a possible future [listing on NASDAQ or other senior US stock exchange](#)". Both of these events should be strong catalysts to help the stock price potentially move higher.

StageZero Life Sciences trades with a market cap of just C\$41 million. Analyst's consensus price target is [C\\$4.00](#), so there is still plenty of potential upside ahead given the current stock price of C\$0.84.

Disclaimer: Matt Bohlsen is a shareholder of StageZero Life Sciences Ltd. (TSX: SZLS)