LiRI Lab Covid transmission Mitigation Strategy

Overview

This document contains the strategy adopted by the LiRI lab to mitigate the transmission of the novel Corona virus (SARS-CoV-2). It consists of a generalised testing procedure to be adopted for all experiments as well as recommendations for personal protective equipment depending on the level of risk of transmission posed by a particular experimental modality. While increasing numbers of the Swiss population have been fully vaccinated, Covid rates are at the time of writing these guidelines, September 2021, are increasing again. This is in part due to the emergence of a variant, the DELTA variant, which is more transmissible. Therefore, it is prudent to keep these conservative restrictions in place until the end of 2021 when they will next be reviewed. The virus is mainly transmitted by the respiratory route and is thus more likely to be transmitted when people are in close contact with each other in indoor settings. Therefore, the requirement to maintain social distance as much as is feasibly possible and to wear a mask will remain. To allow respiratory droplets to settle out of the air within a testing room a gap of one hour between participants should be scheduled. The risk of transmission of the virus from surface contact is small, however an increase in the prevalence of gastrointestinal viruses, particularly Norovirus, is expected in the autumn. Therefore, surface cleaning between participants has also been included in the testing procedure.

General Testing Procedure

Communication with the participant prior to the experiment

1. Screen participants over the telephone to ensure they meet criteria for participation in your study and complete a Covid-19 screening questionnaire.
2. Brief the participant:
    - The procedures for the experiment should be clearly explained as well as the protocols for the mitigation of the transmission of Covid-19.
    - Participants will be instructed to bring their own water bottle and will be informed that snacks and drinks (even water) will not be available.
3. The telephone screening should be followed up with a confirmation email which includes an information sheet and an informed consent form.
4. Book the required testing room and add the ventilation time as a separate booking.

Day of Testing

Prior to the participant's arrival

The researcher will sanitise their hands and do the appropriate PPE for the testing protocol. Details of the appropriate level of PPE based on the amount of physical contact between the researcher and the participant can be found in Appendix 1.

1. Clean all surfaces which the participant is likely to come into contact with using disinfectant, allowing 30 seconds before wiping the surfaces dry with paper towel.
2. Clean any equipment/transducers which will be used with appropriate disinfection wipes.
3. Ready any forms/paperwork for the participant.
4. Once the booth is prepared, the researcher should sanitise their hands again.

Once your participant arrives

Participants should be advised to be punctual and arrive no more than 5 minutes before the start of the testing session.

Experimental procedures - General

1. The participant's personal effects should be stored in one of the lockers in the reception area in the lab.
2. The experimenter will explain the experimental procedures while maintaining a safe distance from the participant. Talking should be minimized, focusing on the necessary instructions and answering questions about the procedure.
3. The participant will be directed to read the information sheets and complete the informed consent form, including those for COVID-19 risk mitigation. The experimenter will retrieve the forms to check they have been filled out correctly.
4. The specific protocol for the experiment should then be followed.

Experimental procedures - Experiment Specific

Your experiment may require any additional procedures to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.

After the experiment

1. After the experiment is over and the participant has left, the experimenter should follow the normal clean up procedures for their experimental protocol.
2. The experimenter should then sanitise the equipment used in the experiment and any surfaces the participant is likely to have come into contact with.
3. Finally, the experimenter should do any PPE and sanitise their hands.

Additional Information for running an experiment

The experimenter should monitor that the participant adheres to the hygiene requirements and should be immediately available if the participant requests assistance at any time during the session.

PPE Recommendations

Broadly speaking, experiments run in the LiRI lab can be divided into three types:

Type 1: experiments where the researcher and the participant(s) can easily maintain social distance.

Type 2: experiments where the researcher and the participant(s) cannot maintain social distance and a short amount of close contact is required for set up (for example, EEG or fNIRS).

Type 3: experiments in which the researcher is likely to come into contact with saliva from the participant (for example, EMA).

The division of the three types of experiments is based roughly on the associated risk of transmission to the experimenter.

Type 1: Behavioural experiments where the researcher and the participant can maintain 2 metres social distance.

- Experimenter and participant should both wear a mask (Type IIR Certified).
- Eye protection (safety glasses), aprons & gloves for the researcher are optional.

Type 2: Any experiment where the researcher and the participant can't maintain social distance.

- Experimenter and participant should wear a face mask (Type IIR Certified).
- Experimenter may choose to wear a lab coat or an apron.
- Eye protection should be worn (safety glasses).

Type 3: Any experiment where the researcher is likely to come into contact with saliva.

- Researcher should have a change of clothes for testing, with sleeves ending above the elbows.
- Experimenter and participant should wear a face mask (Type N95).
- Experimenter should wear a full single use gown with long sleeves.
- Experimenter should wear gloves.
- Eye protection should be worn consisting of safety glasses and a face shield.

References:

CDC (7 May 2020). "Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission". Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved 22 July 2021.

WHO (13 December 2021) "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How is it transmitted?". www.who.int. World Health Organization. Retrieved 22 July 2021.