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ASIA EDITION

CEPI expands investment in COVID-19 vaccine development

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CEPI will provide a further $4.4 million to rapidly advance 2 additional vaccine candidate



CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, on 10 March 2020 announced the expansion of its COVID-19 vaccine portfolio. CEPI will be investing a further $4.4 million in partnering agreements with Novavax, Inc. and The University of Oxford to rapidly develop vaccine candidates against COVID-19. This brings CEPI's total investment in COVID-19 vaccine R&D to $23.7 million.

CEPI will provide initial funding to Novavax to enable preparations for phase 1 trials. Funding for The University of Oxford project will support the manufacture of vaccine materials required for preclinical and phase 1 testing. Earlier this year, CEPI announced initial funding to Curevac Inc., Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc., Moderna, Inc., and University of Queensland to develop COVID-19 vaccine candidates using innovative platform technologies.

The investments announced today are a result of a recent global call for proposals that CEPI issued in early February, which invited funding applications for proven vaccine technology that could be used to rapidly develop a vaccine against the new coronavirus, and most importantly at scale and with the necessary equitable access provisions.

Richard Hatchett, CEO of CEPI said:

"COVID-19 is having huge impact on individuals, societies, and economies. CEPI is working at speed to develop a vaccine, which will be crucial in the world's efforts to tackle this virus. CEPI has so far invested in the development of 6 vaccine candidates against COVID-19.

"We've created a diverse portfolio of candidates based on a wide range of vaccine technologies—including novel platforms technologies and other more established approaches—to ensure that we have multiple shots on goal and a balanced portfolio. Vaccine development is complex and difficult and will require concerted global effort. There are no guarantees of success, but we are working as fast and as hard as we can with the hope of delivering safe and effective vaccines that may be available for broader use potentially within the next 12-18 months.

"Investing in vaccine development now is an investment in the future health of all our societies. An urgent, global, concerted effort is now needed to raise the money required to advance the development of COVID-19 vaccines"

Novavax, Inc. (recombinant protein nanoparticle technology)

Novavax has produced and is currently assessing multiple nanoparticle vaccine candidates to identify the best candidate(s) for human testing, which is expected to begin by the end of spring 2020. Novavax is creating COVID-19 vaccine candidates using its proprietary recombinant protein nanoparticle technology platform to generate antigens derived from the coronavirus spike (S) protein. Novavax expects to use its proprietary Matrix-M™ adjuvant with its COVID-19 vaccine candidate to enhance immune responses. Novavax has experience in rapid innovative vaccine development against novel emerging viruses, including efforts to develop vaccines against the similar coronaviruses Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The University of Oxford (ChAdOx1 vectored vaccine)

ChAdOx1 is a replication-deficient simian adenoviral vaccine vector. This vaccine platform has been used to produce vaccine candidates against multiple pathogens, including Influenza, Chikungunya, and Zika. In 2018, CEPI provided up to $19 million to Oxford to develop vaccines against Lassa, Nipah, and MERS. Oxford's ChAdOx1 MERS candidate has completed phase 1 studies and a second clinical study is underway in Saudi Arabia.