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CEPI partners with Japan's NEC Group for AI-designed betacoronavirus vaccine

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NEC becomes the first Japanese company to participate in CEPI's activities for promoting vaccine development



Norway-based CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and NEC Corporation in Japan have announced the latest funding award under CEPI's $200 million programme to advance the development of vaccines that provide broad protection against SARS-CoV-2 variants and other betacoronaviruses.

CEPI will provide seed funding of up to $4.8 million to NEC OncoImmunity AS (NOI), a Norway-based subsidiary of NEC, which specializes in artificial intelligence-driven biotechnology, to support the initial development of broadly protective betacoronavirus vaccine candidates.

NEC, through NOI, will lead a research consortium including the European Vaccine Initiative (EVI) and Oslo University Hospital to deliver a project which aims to establish preclinical proof of concept for a vaccine based on mRNA technology that protects against a broad range of betacoronaviruses.

NEC will apply its experience and capabilities in artificial intelligence (AI)-powered design of immunogens to identify novel vaccine antigens with broad reactivity against betacoronaviruses. The lead antigens will be selected iteratively and validated in preclinical studies against known betacoronaviruses that already pose a significant epidemic or pandemic risk, such as SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2 & MERS-CoV.