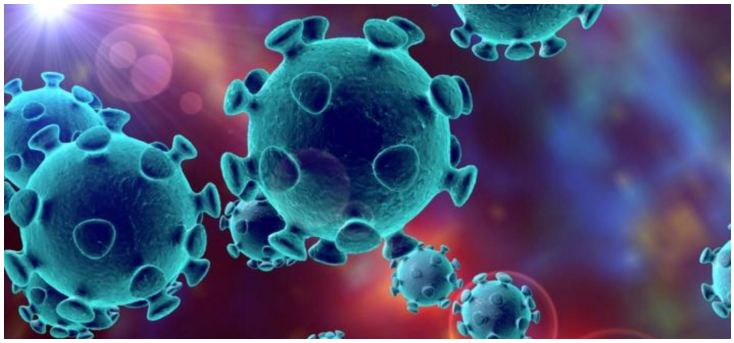
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Uvax Bio receives $2.6 M funding to develop vaccine against Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

March 26, 2025 | News

Nanoparticle design mimics size and shape of MERS virus to trigger enhanced immune response



Efforts to advance the first-ever vaccine against Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) are progressing, with a new investment from Norway-based Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) moving a promising vaccine candidate into preclinical trials.

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral illness caused by MERS coronavirus, from the same viral family as COVID-19. Outbreaks can start when the virus spreads from camels to humans. MERS has a higher fatality rate than COVID-19, with up to a third of infections resulting in death.

With up to $2.6 million funding from CEPI, the new MERS vaccine is being developed by Uvax Bio, an early-stage vaccine technology company which is a spin-out of The Scripps Research Institute in the US. The investment forms part of CEPI's wider coronavirus vaccine portfolio.

The vaccine is being built using Uvax Bio's proprietary protein nanoparticle technology, 1c-SApNP, licensed from Scripps Research. The technology is already being tested against other infectious diseases, including HIV where an in-human trial is ongoing.

Alongside its innovative vaccine design, Uvax Bio's technology is advantageous as the platform uses a simple and robust manufacturing process to express the nanoparticles in just one-step. It is also expected to not require complex frozen storage, which can otherwise be a barrier to vaccine access, for up to one-year.

CEPI's funding will also support research to assess manufacturing the vaccine through an alternative production method, known as the C1 fungal expression system. If successful, this could increase the speed of vaccine production and lower manufacturing costs to improve access to vaccine doses in the future.