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India ramps up Disease X preparedness with $8.9 M funding boost from CEPI for freezer-free RNA vaccine

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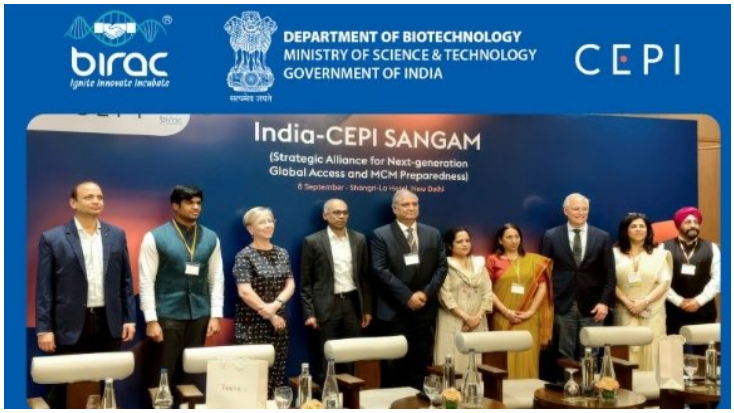
An alternative world-first technology using a â??nanoemulsionâ?? design



Indian biotechnology company Immunoscript Life Science will receive up to $8.9 million from Norway-based Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to advance clinical testing of its thermostable next-generation saRNA vaccine platform, marking an important boost to India's growing RNA medicine sector while potentially expanding the reach of RNA vaccines to communities where cold-chain infrastructure is limited.

Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines played a key role in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fast and flexible in their design compared to other types of traditional vaccine approaches, the technology is today being adapted to potentially protect against other infectious threats. The vaccine platform is therefore considered pivotal to the 100 Days Mission, the goal spearheaded by CEPI and backed by India and other G20 and G7 nations, to develop vaccines against emerging diseases in as little as 100 days.

However, despite their promise, conventional mRNA-based vaccines must be stored and transported at ultra-low temperatures to remain stable and effective. During an outbreak, this can impact access to doses in low-resource or remote settings that lack the equipment needed to prevent vaccines from spoiling, hindering efforts to save lives and contain the spread of disease.

The proprietary CLNE™ self-amplifying RNA (saRNA) vaccine platform developed and authorised in India during the COVID-19 pandemic and now owned by Immunoscript, is an alternative world-first technology using a 'nanoemulsion' design that can help overcome such temperature challenges. CEPI's investment in the Pune-based research company will further develop the platform.

With the new investment, Immunoscript scientists will conduct an early-stage trial in people to assess the safety of the CLNE™ saRNA vaccine technology and the immune response elicited after vaccination against the Rabies virus. The pathogen will serve as a prototype virus to further demonstrate the capacity of the technology against diseases other than COVID-19. The study is expected to launch in India, with researchers using cutting-edge AI tools to determine the optimal dose of the vaccine candidate in people.