

£20m announced to fund vaccines for coronavirus and other infectious diseases

The Government has today pledged £20 million to develop new vaccines to combat the world's deadliest diseases, amid concerns over the ongoing novel coronavirus outbreak in China.

When visiting the Public Health England's Porton Down laboratory last week, Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced the UK will ramp up efforts to fund ground-breaking research into vaccines, diagnostics and cures to fight against the threat of future viruses.

The new funding will support work developing new vaccines for epidemics, including their three new programmes to develop vaccines against the novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV. These projects aim to advance 2019-nCoV vaccine candidates into clinical testing as quickly as possible.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Vaccines are our best defense against a host of deadly diseases, including coronavirus. The UK is a hub of world-leading and pioneering research, and it is vital that we lead the way in developing new vaccines to target global threats with scientists from across the world.

The £20 million announced today will help our globally recognised vaccine development capabilities continue to develop new defences against emerging diseases including coronavirus. It's paramount we invest in vital research about infectious diseases, keeping the UK at the forefront of modern-day science so we can share this knowledge globally.

The £20m in new funding will go to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) – an innovative global partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil society organisations launched in Davos in 2017 to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics.

CEPI was originally formed in response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

Dr Richard Hatchett, CEO of CEPI, said:

CEPI welcomes the UK's continued support and funding for our vital work, which comes at a crucial moment as the world races to respond to the emergence of a novel coronavirus. The rapid global spread and unique epidemiological characteristics of the virus are deeply

concerning.

Our hope is that, with our partners, we can get an investigational vaccine from gene sequencing of the pathogen through to clinical testing in 16 weeks. The earliest stage of clinical trials (Phase I), to establish the safety of investigational vaccines, would take around two to four months.

This is an extremely ambitious timeline – indeed, it would be unprecedented in the of field vaccine development. It is important to remember that even if we are successful – and there can be no guarantee – there will be further challenges to navigate before we can make vaccines more broadly available.

The Government is also in initial stages of talks between NIHR and UKRI regarding plans to run a rapid research call to support the global response to 2019-nCoV.