

£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.

Terrorist incident in Streatham: PM Boris Johnson's statement



My thoughts are with the injured victims and their loved ones following today's horrific attack in Streatham.

I want to pay tribute to the speed and bravery of the police who responded and confronted the attacker – preventing further injuries and violence – and all of the emergency services who came to the aid of others.

An investigation is taking place at pace to establish the full facts of what happened, and the Government will provide all necessary support to the police and security services as this work goes on.

Following the awful events at Fishmonger's Hall, we have moved quickly to introduce a package of measures to strengthen every element of our response to terrorism – including longer prison sentences and more money for the police.

Tomorrow, we will announce further plans for fundamental changes to the system for dealing with those convicted of terrorism offences.

Published 2 February 2020

Coronavirus public information campaign launched across the UK

The government-funded campaign will include public health advice on how people can protect themselves from infection.

Similar to the 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' campaign used for flu and norovirus, it will promote important hygiene practices, such as regularly washing hands and always sneezing into a tissue, to stem the spread of viruses.

HM Government and NHS-branded information will appear in radio and print media, as well as social media.

The campaign will advise the public to:

- always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs and sneezes, and bin the tissue
- wash hands with soap and water, or use sanitiser gel, to kill germs

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Our highly trained and experienced clinicians are working round the clock to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the UK. The government has detailed plans for how to deal with an outbreak like this. We can all play our part.

Basic hygiene such as washing our hands regularly and using tissues when we cough and sneeze can play an important role in minimising the spread of viruses like this. Today we have launched a UK-wide public information campaign to help the public protect themselves and each other.

Our world-class NHS is well prepared and we are doing everything we

can to protect the public.

[Coronavirus public information poster](#) (PDF, 62.9 KB, 1 page)

[Coronavirus public information video](#)

People who have travelled back from the Hubei province in China within the last 14 days are being asked to:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the city
- if you are in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885

Anyone who has travelled from anywhere else in China (not including Macao or Hong Kong) to the UK in the last 14 days and develops symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath should immediately self-isolate, even if symptoms are minor, and call NHS 111, or 0300 200 7885 if you are in Northern Ireland.

The UK is extremely well prepared for any potential outbreak of an infectious disease – we are one of the first countries in the world to have developed a test for the new virus.

On Friday 31 January 2020, 2 patients in England, who are members of the same family, tested positive for coronavirus. They are receiving specialist NHS care and we are using tried and tested infection control procedures to prevent further spread of the virus.

The government is already working rapidly to identify any contacts the patients had to prevent further spread, and are in close contact with the World Health Organization and the international community as the outbreak in China develops to ensure the UK is ready for all eventualities.

Coronavirus presents with flu-like symptoms including a fever, a cough or difficulty breathing. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. For further information on coronavirus, visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

[Universal Periodic Review 35th session: Minister for Human Rights statement](#)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process, involving a peer review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states. It is a unique tool of the Human Rights Council, aimed at sharing best practice. The

UK strongly supports the UPR, having spoken at every session and about every country since the process began. The session reviewed 14 States: [Armenia](#), [Grenada](#), [Guinea](#), [Guinea Bissau](#), [Guyana](#), [Kenya](#), [Kiribati](#), [Kuwait](#), [Kyrgyzstan](#), [the Lao People's Democratic Republic](#), [Lesotho](#), [Spain](#), [Sweden](#), and [Turkey](#).

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Throughout the 35th Session, the UK Government provided a recommendation relating to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking to every government undergoing review. Recommendations were wide-ranging, calling for improved mechanisms to identify and support victims, the creation of robust legislation, and the consistent and effective prosecution of perpetrators. In support of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 50 for Freedom Campaign, we also made recommendations for the ratification of the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, requiring governments to tackle forced labour in all its forms and provide protection to victims.

According to the Global Slavery Index, 40.3 million people across the world will be victims of modern slavery on any given day. It is a global problem that respects neither borders nor jurisdictions, and requires all states to act proactively to protect the most vulnerable in their societies. The UK Government continues to drive forward global action in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking. In 2015, the UK passed world-leading legislation requiring businesses to report on how they are eradicating modern slavery from their supply chains, and this year, the Government will publish a modern slavery statement setting out the steps taken to prevent modern slavery in its own supply chains. The UK Government also announced in 2019 the appointment of Jennifer Townson as the Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy to advocate for tackling modern slavery globally, and enhance coordination with other nations committed to countering modern slavery and human trafficking.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) continues to be a priority for the United Kingdom, underlined by my appointment as the first Special Envoy for FoRB, and the subsequent appointment of Rehman Chishti to this role. We remain deeply concerned by the scale and severity of violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world and have raised the issue in a number of reviews.

Although the UK actively stands up for the millions of people around the world who are denied the right to have and practise a religion, belief, or no belief at all, according to their conscience, we know there is always more we can do. That is why, last year, we commissioned an independent Review into the support that the Foreign Office provides to persecuted Christians around the world. Work to implement its recommendations, which will not just support Christians but members of other persecuted faith and belief communities too, is proceeding well, with ten of the 22 recommendations already implemented or in progress. I hope our Review encourages other Governments – even those where human rights are well established and upheld by the law – to explore what more they can do to support some of the most vulnerable people around

the world.

UN Treaty Body elections

Since the 27th session of the UPR, we have made the recommendation to 'adopt an open, merit-based selection process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections' to a considerable number of states. These expert bodies are a central part of the UN human rights system, charged with monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions in states which have signed up to them. The UK continues to advocate strengthening the quality, independence and diversity of Treaty Body membership.

Armenia

I recognise Armenia's positive progress since its 2015 review, and the Government's commitment to wide-ranging reforms, including Armenia's conduct of elections in December 2018 and the advances in media freedom. However, I remain concerned about reported incidences of hate speech and attacks against LGBT individuals. I welcome Armenia's legislative reforms towards gender equality and combatting violence against women and encourage the Government to adopt further measures to mainstream gender in all aspects of government reforms.

Grenada

Turning to Grenada, I welcome progress since its 2015 review, including ratification of a number of human rights treaties such as the Convention Against Torture. I also recognise that no executions have been carried out in Grenada for decades but encourage the Government to establish a formal moratorium on executions, with the aim to eventually abolish the death penalty.

Guinea

On Guinea, I welcome the Government's engagement with the UPR and progress made in the country, particularly the abolition of the death penalty. However, I urge the Government to ensure the safety of journalists and human rights defenders, so they can exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association without fear of reprisals. I am also concerned by the high number of protestors and bystanders who have died during protests, including up to the 2013 parliamentary elections, and in recent months. For 2020, it is crucial that elections are transparent, fair, timely and credible.

Guinea Bissau

I welcome Guinea Bissau's advances to promote and protect human rights and commend progress on implementing reforms in the judicial sector, including efforts to expand access to justice beyond Bissau. However, I am concerned that political instability in Guinea Bissau has delayed further progress, including implementation of human rights legislation and other measures to protect women, children, and vulnerable populations. I also urge the Government to take stronger action against corruption, and to ensure freedom

of peaceful assembly is respected.

Guyana

On Guyana, I welcome progress since its last review and commend the Government's increased efforts to promote and protect media freedom. I encourage Guyana to join the Media Freedom Coalition in the coming year. I also welcome the removal of the mandatory death penalty for murder, but it is regrettable that death sentences continue to be imposed. I urge the Government to establish a formal moratorium on executions, with a view to eventual abolition.

Kenya

Turning to Kenya, I recognise the human rights progress in the country, particularly in education. I also commend Kenya's development of a more supportive environment for police reforms. However, I remain concerned by limited progress made to strengthen mechanisms to hold individual officers accountable for abuse of power. I urge the Government to empower and resource the Independent Police Oversight Authority, Internal Affairs Unit, and Director of Public Prosecutions to investigate fully and prosecute cases of police abuse.

Kiribati

I recognise Kiribati's progress since its 2015 review efforts to prevent gender-based violence. I recommend the implementation of the Family Welfare Act 2013 and the National Approach to Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence Action Plan to improve access to essential services for violence survivors, embed measures to change social norms, and facilitate redress of such crimes. I welcome Kiribati's work on scoping a National Human Rights Institution via the South Pacific Community's Pacific Commonwealth Equalities Programme. I urge the Government to establish a National Human Rights Institution, in line with the Paris Principles, using expertise from regional and UN bodies as necessary.

Kuwait

On Kuwait, I recognise the progress on human rights and the improvements to domestic worker conditions, but remain concerned by the reports of confiscation of passports, debt bondage, and the continued use of the kafala sponsorship system. I welcome Kuwait's progress to improve rights for stateless persons, but am concerned that access to essential services is often restricted. I urge Kuwait to naturalise stateless persons eligible for Kuwaiti nationality, and regularise the status of the remainder. I also urge Kuwait to protect the right to freedom of expression for all, including speech online.

Kyrgyzstan

I welcome steps taken by the Kyrgyz Republic to promote and protect human rights, such as improvement to legislation on gender-based violence and on

child, early and forced marriage. However, I urge the Government to improve implementation of this legislation, by increasing the number of cases taken to court. In this parliamentary election year, a free press is essential for ensuring democratic accountability. I urge the Government to protect freedom of the media by adopting legislation requiring sentences to be proportionate to the offence, and by decriminalising defamation.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic

I recognise progress in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, including on education and healthcare. I welcome increasing infrastructure and development in Laos, but remain concerned about projects resulting in forced land appropriation. I am also concerned about restrictions on freedom of expression and foreign news agencies. I urge the Government to promote and protect freedom of expression for all.

Lesotho

Turning to Lesotho, I welcome the ongoing National Reform process and the recent collaboration between the Government and civil society organisations on the reforms and the process to establish a Human Rights Commission. However, I remain seriously concerned that torture and police brutality continue to be reported, yet perpetrators are rarely prosecuted, and I urge the Government to address the lengthy delays in the judicial system and politicisation of judicial appointments.

Spain

I welcome Spain's strong commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. We commend Spain for supporting the UN's human rights work around the world. I encourage Spain to ensure that administrations work together to ensure that asylum seekers/refugees have sufficient access to social protection and services and their claims are processed efficiently.

Sweden

On Sweden, I welcome their long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. I commend Sweden's extensive contribution to human rights domestically and internationally, commitment to advancing women's and girls' rights, and efforts to ensure media freedom. I encourage Sweden to maintain efforts to combat discrimination and hate crimes against minority groups, and welcome its adoption of a national plan to combat racism and hate crime.

Turkey

Turning to Turkey, the UK appreciates the challenges that Turkey has faced since the 2016 failed coup. We note that the end of the state of emergency following the attempted coup, and real progress against Daesh and the PKK, provide an opportunity for reform ahead of the 2023 elections. However, I am concerned by the harassment and imprisonment of journalists and human rights defenders. The UK trusts the Government will remove obstacles to freedom of

expression for all, and we urge the Government to decriminalise defamation.

I urge all countries under review during this session to give full and serious consideration to the UK recommendations. I encourage them not only to accept them, but also to implement all the recommendations in a timely and comprehensive manner. I look forward to the formal UPR adoption at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2020.

Further information

[Letters from the Prime Minister to Department for Exiting the European Union Ministers](#)

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