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COVID-19: 155 Drugs and 79 Vaccines Currently Under Development Worldwide

By *Hospimedica International staff writers*

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A total of 155 drugs and 79 vaccines are currently being developed worldwide to combat COVID-19, according

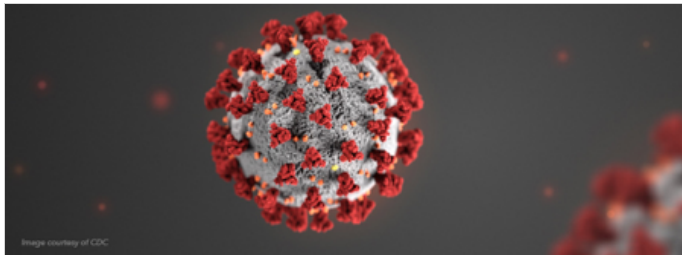


Image: Illustration of a 2019- novel coronavirus (nCoV) virion (Photo courtesy of CDC)

to a study released by the Austrian Institute for Health Technology Assessment (AIHTA; Vienna, Austria), based on figures compiled in collaboration with the organization's European counterparts.

Most of the 155 drugs under development against COVID-19 have already been approved for other viral infections, but require special approval against COVID-19. Of the 79 vaccine candidates, none has yet moved beyond the development stage. Government agencies and healthcare organizations around the world will soon be facing the challenge of selecting the most appropriate drugs and vaccines among a wide range of candidates.

It seems currently as if the test tubes of this world exist only for corona viruses – pharmaceutical and biotech companies, university institutes, research facilities and clinics worldwide are investing enormous resources into the research and development of drugs and vaccines to fight the pandemic. It is becoming increasingly difficult for decision-makers in government and healthcare to maintain an overview, although cost-intensive decisions will be necessary at the latest when



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the first prophylaxes or therapies become available.

Using international sources, Dr. Claudia Wild, head of the AIHTA, and her team have identified a total of 155 drugs that are being tested at this time for their effect against SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19. These are all based on one or more of the following known antiviral agent(s): Remdesivir, Lopinavir + Ritonavir (Kaletra®), Favipirvir (Avigan®), Darunavir (Prezista®), Chloroquine Phosphates (Resochin®), Hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil®), Camostat Mesilate (Foipan®), APN01 (rhACE2), Tocilizumab (Roactemra®), Sarilumab (Kevzara®) and Interferon beta 1a (SNG001).

Dr. Wild pointed out that, "since the majority of these compounds are drugs that are already approved for other indications, international regulators emphasize the need for robust evidence in pivotal studies". In order to reinforce this claim, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) founded its own COVID-19 Task Force in 9 April of this year.

The 79 vaccine candidates identified by the AIHTA are divided into three types: Live vaccines (with attenuated virus strains); dead vaccines (with virus proteins); or gene-based vaccines (with specific DNA or mRNA). Most of these projects are still in the development stage and have not yet been approved.

The AIHTA has created so-called vignettes for those drugs or vaccines that are particularly advanced in development or those that are considered particularly promising in biomedical literature. These are short, concise descriptions that provide additional information. In total, the AIHTA issued 11 vignettes on drugs and 8 on vaccine candidates. Overall, the AIHTA report should offer a valuable tool for decision-making at a time when healthcare systems have to choose the most appropriate drugs or vaccines against COVID-19 from a wide range of candidates.

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