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SK bioscience gets $140 M from CEPI to develop mRNA vaccines

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CEPI supports up to $40 million for early development of mRNA vaccine platform to SK bioscience; up to a further $100 million could be made available for late-stage development



South Korea-based SK bioscience has made a new partnership agreement with Norway-based Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for the development of mRNA vaccines to quickly respond to the spread of infectious diseases and to expand its vaccine portfolio.

The purpose of the agreement is that SK bioscience, which has secured the latest vaccine platform technologies such as cell culture, bacterial culture, and genetic recombination, expands its portfolio including the mRNA platform technology and establishes an R&D system that can prevent existing or unknown viruses in the future with global institutions. The company will use the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) and Lassa virus to develop the mRNA vaccine platform.

SK bioscience is the CEPI's first partner among global vaccine companies under the CEPI's project of 'RNA vaccine platform technologies and vaccine library development against emerging and endemic infectious diseases' to quickly respond to unknown infectious diseases (Disease-X) and solve the vaccine equity in low- and middle-income countries.

Under the agreement, SK bioscience will receive up to $140 million in R&D expenses from CEPI. Up to $40 million in initial funding will be made available to support phase 1/2 clinical trials of two mRNA vaccine platform projects. Pending results from phase 1/2 studies, a further $100 million in funding could be made available to support late-stage trials/licensure to further validate the mRNA platform and have it ready for use in outbreak situations.