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Hong Kong- Columbia scientists to initiate Global Pandemic Research Alliance

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Acclaimed US-based Columbia University virologist Professor David Ho and The University of Hong Kong (HKU) microbiologist Professor Kwok-yung Yuen are teaming up to create a global alliance for conducting research in emerging infectious diseases.

Other partners in discussion include Tsinghua University, China and Doherty Institute/University of Melbourne, Australia. Professor Ho stated that the alliance will pursue "a comprehensive set of research initiatives on surveillance, diagnostics, antiviral drugs & monoclonal antibodies, viral evolution and resistance to therapeutics, antibody engineering, vaccine development and pathogenesis." The alliance is expected to focus on respiratory viruses that can be directly transmitted person to person.

Professors Ho and Yuen first collaborated in 2003 on the use of small molecule inhibitors and recombinant modified vaccinia virus Ankara against the SARS coronavirus.

Following his first successful collaboration with HKU's Department of Microbiology, Professor Ho founded the AIDS Institute at HKU to conduct basic and applied research that facilitates the understanding of AIDS pathogenesis and the development of effective AIDS vaccines. The many years of collaboration have resulted in technological breakthroughs on B and T cell immunity, leading to the discoveries of broadly neutralizing antibodies and potent vaccines against HIV.

Image caption- Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, Professor David Ho and Dean of Medicine Professor Lau Chak-sing