



DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST THE MOST DANGEROUS FUTURE VIRAL THREATS

The USG needs to support MCM development for future health emergencies

Medical countermeasures (MCMs) will be needed for future major national health emergencies and to counter the greatest biosecurity threats. But many of the medicines or vaccines we will need have no commercial market and they take time to develop – this work must be done ahead of any crisis.

Because of this, the US government has developed an effective partnership with private sector companies to develop drugs, vaccines, and diagnostic devices that would be used during such emergencies.

The Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) within HHS has the most important role in this public – private partnership to develop MCMs for national health emergencies, including those needed for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) risks, pandemic influenza, and new major infectious disease threats.

National health emergencies and biosecurity threats which could result in the most mortality and economic and societal disruption are those caused by novel highly contagious and lethal viruses for which we have no existing immune system or MCM protections. Such viruses could be introduced naturally, accidentally, or intentionally into the US and could quickly spread unabated around the world.

BARDA needs a program focused on the most dangerous and transmissible viruses

While BARDA has had high success developing a range of MCMs against many threats, BARDA does not have a dedicated program focused on developing MCMs designed to target viral families or using platform technologies able to counter future pandemic threats. A limited number of viral families pose the greatest risk of emerging as the next lethal and contagious threat.

Through Operation Warp Speed, BARDA, other USG agencies, and private industry successfully used the mRNA vaccine platform to develop COVID-19 vaccines in record time. BARDA could likewise leverage mRNA and other platform technologies in a program to develop MCMs against the most dangerous and transmissible viral families, helping to ensure the USG and its partners have the capacity to make these products rapidly and at large scale in an emergency.

Congress could act to create within BARDA a dedicated program against the most dangerous viral threats

- Congress can provide clear authority, oversight, and funding to establish a dedicated program at BARDA that would support private sector partners to develop MCMs for the greatest viral threats that the country could face.