

How we are developing a coronavirus vaccine so quickly

Just six months ago, when the death toll from the coronavirus [stood at one](#) and neither it nor the disease it caused [had a name](#), a team of Chinese scientists uploaded its genetic sequence to a [public site](#). That kicked off the record-breaking rush to develop vaccines — the salve that experts say could ultimately quell the pandemic.

The colossal impact of the coronavirus is motivating the speed, opening a spigot of funding and inspiring research teams around the world to join the hunt. But the astonishing pace of the progress is also a consequence of the virus itself: It is, scientifically speaking, an easier target for potential vaccines than other pathogens, and a prime candidate for cutting-edge vaccine platforms new to scientists' toolkits.

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“Once we got the sequence, we pulled the trigger to ask how fast we could go,” said Barney Graham, the deputy director of the National Institutes of Health’s Vaccine Research Center. “And because it was a coronavirus, we could get into a Phase 3 trial in six months instead of two years.”

Of course, progress so far remains just that. The vaccines are now facing their real tests: the monthslong, Phase 3 trials that will demonstrate whether or not they protect people from the virus.

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