

‘We don’t know what we don’t know’: Next slate of vaccines might be better at fighting new COVID variations

Now, a year after the pandemic first erupted, three COVID vaccines have been given emergency authorization by either the U.S. or U.K., as well as other countries.

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But impressive as they are, these vaccines alone will likely not be sufficient to end the pandemic, experts say. Luckily, there are hundreds of other COVID vaccines under development—including many with new mechanisms of action—that could prove to be effective and cheaper and easier to distribute.

“I believe that this virus is going to change and that the vaccines we have approved right now are just not going to be as effective as we think they are,” says [Danny Altmann](#), an immunologist at Imperial College London.

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[Gregory Poland](#), a vaccinologist at the Mayo Clinic, agrees it is far too early to think we have this virus beat. He points out that no vaccine for a coronavirus has ever been deployed in a public vaccination program. And mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer’s and Moderna’s—touted by many as the future of vaccinology—have never previously been brought to market. “We don’t know what we don’t know. We have no idea what surprises we might find in a virus that we’ve only been aware of for a year,” says Poland.

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