

Drugs on the shelf: Repurposing existing therapies to treat COVID

“The advantage of drug repurposing is that that drug is already approved. It’s already gone through the regulatory process to show that it’s safe and effective for something. So if you can find additional uses for that drug, you already know there’s a good safety profile,” explained Dr. David Fajgenbaum, an immunologist at the University of Pennsylvania, and the director of the Center for Cytokine Storm Treatment and Laboratory.

Not to mention: Cheap, generic versions of many older medications exist because their patents have expired.

“It’s just a matter of matching the right drug to the right disease,” Fajgenbaum said.

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With that, they launched [the CORONA project](#) (Fajgenbaum is its director and lead investigator), one of many global efforts (both private and governmental) trying to identify, trial and/or track promising treatments among existing drugs for Covid-19.

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Fajgenbaum is both haunted and driven by the prospect that other medications are sitting there, in plain sight, and could help someone battle something.

“So what keeps me up at night is saying, ‘These drugs are out there. What work can we do to figure out how these drugs that are approved for something can maybe be used in a new way that can save a patient’s life,’ ” he said.

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