

Antibody that can 'defeat' coronavirus

AGENCIES

Scientists created a monoclonal antibody that can defeat the new coronavirus in the lab, an early but promising step in efforts to find treatments and curb the pandemic's spread.

The experimental antibody has neutralized the virus in cell cultures. While that's early in the drug development process -- before animal research and human trials -- the antibody may help prevent or treat Covid-19 and related diseases in the future, either alone or in a drug combination, according to a study published Monday in the journal Nature Communications.

More research is needed to see whether the findings are confirmed in a clinical setting and how precisely the antibody defeats the virus, Berend-Jan Bosch of Utrecht University in the Netherlands and colleagues wrote in the paper.

The antibody known as 47D11 targets the spike protein that gives the new coronavirus a crown-like shape and lets it enter human cells. In the Utrecht experiments, it didn't just defeat the virus responsible for Covid-19 but also a cousin equipped with similar spike proteins, which causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS.

Monoclonal antibodies are lab-created proteins that resemble naturally occurring versions the body raises to fight off bacteria and viruses. Highly potent, they target exactly one site on a virus. In this case, the scientists used genetically modified mice to produce different antibodies to the spike proteins of coronaviruses. After a subsequent screening process, 47D11 emerged as showing neutralizing activity. Researchers then reformatted that antibody to create a fully human version, according to the paper.



This picture taken on May 4, 2020 shows members of a Syrian family from the town of Ariha in the southern countryside of the Idlib province, breaking their fast together in the midst of the rubble of their destroyed home.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

DEATHS CROSS 250,000

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 251,512 people since the outbreak first emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT. More than 3,595,970 cases were registered in 195 countries and territories. Of these, at least 1,104,600 are now considered recovered. The United States has the highest number of total deaths with 68,934. United Kingdom has the second highest toll with 32,313 deaths, followed by Italy with 29,079 deaths, Spain 25,613 deaths and France with 25,201 deaths.

INDIA'S 'MASSIVE' REPATRIATION

India has embarked on a "massive" operation involving naval ships and aircraft to bring back some of the hundreds of thousands of nationals stuck abroad due to coronavirus restrictions, the government said. India banned all incoming international flights in late March as it imposed one of the world's strictest virus lockdowns, leaving vast numbers of workers and students stranded. A defence spokesman told AFP that two ships were steaming towards the Maldives and another to the United Arab Emirates -- home to a 3.3-million-strong Indian community.

UK TOPS ITALY IN DEATHS

Britain has overtaken Italy to report the highest official death toll from coronavirus in Europe with more than 32,000 deaths, figures released on Tuesday showed. The high death toll could increase political pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who waited longer than other European leaders to order a lockdown to curb the spread of the virus in March.

10,000 CASES IN RUSSIA AGAIN

Russia cemented its place as the European country reporting the highest number of new coronavirus infections yesterday as its total cases soared passed 155,000. Health officials reported 10,102 new infections over the last 24 hours, a decrease of 531 cases from Sunday's record surge, bringing Russia's total to 155,370. According to the government's daily coronavirus update, Russia has 1,451 total deaths, after reporting 95 new fatalities over the last 24 hours.

AUSTRALIA 'LOSING \$2.5 B A WEEK'

Australia's economy is losing Aus\$4 billion (US\$2.5 billion) every week its virus shutdown continues, with GDP forecast to plunge 10 percent in the June quarter, according to official figures. The data highlighted that the country's success in curbing the spread of COVID-19, with new daily cases slowing to single digits or zero across most regions, has come at a heavy economic cost.

70% 'CORONA TAX' ON ALCOHOL

Officials in India's capital imposed a special tax of 70% on retail liquor purchases from today, to deter large gatherings at stores as authorities ease a six-week lockdown imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Taxes on alcohol are a key contributor to the revenue of many of India's 36 states and federal territories, most of which are running short of funds because of the lengthy disruption in economic activity caused by the virus. Police baton-charged hundreds of people who had flocked to liquor shops when they opened on Monday for the first time in a relaxation of the world's biggest lockdown, which is set to run until May 17.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

NY Times leads the way

AFP, New York

The New York Times picked up the most awards as the 2020 Pulitzer Prize winners were announced virtually on Monday owing to the coronavirus outbreak.

Prize board administrator Dana Canedy declared the winners from her living room via a livestream on YouTube rather than at a ceremony at New York's Columbia University.

The Times collected three awards, including for Brian M Rosenthal's investigative report into New York City's taxi industry that revealed predatory loans that took advantage of vulnerable drivers.

It also won the international reporting prize for a series of stories on Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime.

The paper's Nikole Hannah-Jones won best commentary for a personal essay that viewed America's origins through the lens of enslaved Africans.

The Pulitzers are generally regarded as the highest honor that US-based journalists and organizations can receive.

Reuters won the breaking news photography award for pictures of the Hong Kong protests.

The explanatory reporting prize was awarded to the staff of The Washington Post for a series that showed the effects of extreme temperatures on the planet.

Ben Taub of The New Yorker won the feature writing award for a story on a Guantanamo Bay guard's growing friendship with a captor who was tortured.

The Associated Press was awarded the feature photography prize for images showing life in the contested Kashmir as India revoked its semi-autonomous status.

A special citation was awarded to Ida B Wells, an early pioneer of investigative journalism and a civil rights icon.

2020 PULITZERS

India sees 3,900 cases, 195 deaths

NDTV Online

India recorded the biggest single-day jump in the number of coronavirus patients and deaths linked to the illness as 3,900 new cases were reported, 195 COVID-19 patients died in the last 24 hours.

This takes the total to 46,433 COVID-19 cases in the country, including 1,568 deaths. About 12,727 patients have recovered so far. 82,792 patients were tested on Monday. The recovery rate stood at 27.4 per cent this morning, said the Union Health Ministry.

Lockdown restrictions have eased in many parts of the country despite surge in cases.

The lockdown has been one of the strictest in the developing world. The national government is worried that easing up too quickly could accelerate the pace of infections. But some state governments want economic activity to resume as revenue dwindles and millions struggle without income.

3b could live in areas too hot for humans

Study says if global warming continues at present rate, by 2070 life will be difficult

CNN Online

If the planet continues to warm at current levels over the next 50 years, up to 3 billion people could be living in areas that are too hot for humans, a new study has found.

For thousands of years, humans have lived within a narrow "climate niche" where average temperatures are ideal for society to flourish, and conditions favourable to grow food and keep livestock.

In findings published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Monday, an international team of archaeologists, climate scientists and ecologists said that if heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current pace, by 2070 billions of people will be living in conditions hotter than those that have allowed life to thrive for the past 6,000 years.

For every 1°C of warming, 1 billion people will either have to migrate to cooler regions or adapt to extreme heat conditions, the study found. Tim Kohler, co-author of the study said that these findings can be viewed as a worst case or "business-as-usual" scenario of "what could happen if we don't change our ways."

The Earth is currently on track for 3°C of warming by 2100. Regions that stand to be affected include parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, India, Southeast Asia, Arabian Peninsula and Australia -- regions with fast-growing populations, said Chi Xu, another co-author of the report. "Those countries are mostly in global south, with the fastest population growing rate, such as India and Nigeria. These two countries are projected to accommodate the largest populations under extreme temperature conditions," Chi said.



Students serving

FROM PAGE 12

that began on March 26 caused a sudden drop in many people's income and rendered thousands unable to buy food. This has resulted in demonstrations and road blockade across the country by hundreds of desperate people demanding food for over a week.

As the day breaks at DU TSC, Shaikat and his friends put out the earthen stoves that would be used again in the afternoon for iftar.

"As a DU student, we feel that it's our duty to do something for them. There are at least five students who voluntarily help us with the task every day," he said.

Arman Ali, 28, employee of a private company, said he managed to make ends meet with his salary before the crisis. But he has not been paid in seven weeks and had no choice but to eat here.

A university student was among those who were eating there. "I come here from Shantinagar. My parents have not been able to send me any money from the village because they are also struggling," he said.

Many of them told this correspondent that they used to have the ability to donate something to such initiatives before the coronavirus pandemic.

STUDENT BODIES ASSISTING FARMERS Leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Chhatra Union and many other student associations have been reaching out to help those in need.

As farmers found it difficult to harvest paddy due to shortage of labourers amid the coronavirus restrictions, BCL men have been lending a hand to farmers across the country.

Following Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina's instruction, BCL President Al-Nahean Khan Joy and General Secretary Lekhak Bhattacharjee recently visited Munshiganj and urged activists to work with farmers.

BCL activists are also working in paddy fields in Narsingdi and Cumilla districts, he said.

"We will continue the efforts until the restrictions are lifted," Joy said, adding that his organisation has created a fund to help out poor students through the tough times.

Members of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, student wing of Communist Party of Bangladesh, have developed a hand sanitiser and are distributing it for free among low-income people.

General Secretary Anik Roy said they have distributed thousands of bottles last month.

"We are distributing the hand sanitisers mostly among labourers in old Dhaka, Paltan, Shahbagh, Kamrangirchar, and Faridpur, Moulvibazar, Shariatpur districts," he said.

Many journalists and front line healthcare employees also take the bottles from them, he said.

Students of pharmacy, chemistry and biochemistry departments at Dhaka and Jagannath universities are preparing the sanitiser, he added.

US forecast sees virus

FROM PAGE 12

late last year the number of confirmed cases has reached almost 3.6 million while fatalities have topped 252,000.

Europe remains the hardest-hit continent with around 145,000 deaths while the US has recorded close to 68,700, the biggest single-country toll.

Strengthening of Poultry Research and Development Project Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute Savar, Dhaka-1341 Memo No. 33.05.2672.109.11.011.19-203 Date: 05/05/2020 e-Tender Notice

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