

## **WHO urges broader research strategy for countries to prepare for the next pandemic**

Since 2024 World Health Organization (WHO) has called for a fundamental shift in how the global community prepares for epidemics and [pandemics](#).

Given the uncertainty regarding which pathogen will cause the next pandemic, this research and development preparedness and response framework represents a transformative shift from a focus on a limited number of priority pathogens to a global collaborative family-level research preparedness and response approach. Central to strategy is the Prototype pathogen approach, which focuses research on representative pathogens within each family to generate broadly applicable knowledge and tools.

Complementary to One Health, it is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that recognizes that the health of people, animals, plants, and the shared environment are deeply interconnected and interdependent.

The foundation for this framework was based on the World Health Assembly resolution [WHA68.15](#) in May 2015, which requested the WHO to develop an R&D Blueprint for Action to Prevent Epidemics.

A global strategy and preparedness initiative was launched to ensure that targeted research and development would strengthen emergency response by accelerating availability of biomedical technologies to populations and patients during epidemics ([WHO R&D Blueprint for Epidemics](#)).

This strategic shift is also bolstered by the World Health Assembly's adoption of the WHO [Pandemic Agreement](#) in May 2025, reflecting the political commitment and ambitions of 193 WHO Member States to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.

Preparing countermeasures at the family level can contribute to dramatically shorten equitable access to MCMs from the time when a pathogen outbreak is declared

### **A scientific framework to accelerate the research and development of medical countermeasures in response to epidemics and pandemics**

A global scientific prioritization exercise convened in 2024 by WHO engaged more than 200 scientists from over 50 countries to assess epidemic and pandemic risks across pathogens. Experts evaluated evidence related to 28 viral families and one core group of bacteria, encompassing 1,652 known pathogens. The outcome identified Priority pathogens families, 12 viral families and a group of 5 bacteria, as the likely drivers of future epidemics and pandemics, thus forming the foundation for current and future R&D preparedness activities ([WHO R&D Blueprint for Epidemics](#)).

The prioritization process concluded also that epidemic and pandemic preparedness must move beyond a pathogen-by-pathogen approaches; include whole-of-family end to end R&D strategies, needed for epidemic and pandemic preparedness and to enable platform technologies and cross-protective medical countermeasures development; promote global collaboration (a global network of networks) as essential to achieve resilience against emerging threats; and encourage that R&D investments should include support for research for unknown pathogens (“Disease X”) within priority families ([Full report](#)).

### **Landscape of medical countermeasures to prepare for and respond to the next outbreak or pandemic**

WHO maintains a continuously updated a publicly available landscape of product candidate vaccines and therapeutics that are at different phases of clinical development and for priority epidemic and pandemic threats for which no or too few licensed MCMs are available.

To access the Landscape information, an interactive dashboard presenting the global landscape of vaccine and therapeutic candidates has been developed. The tool enables users to explore pipelines by pathogen family, product type, development stage, and geographic distribution.

**Launch visualization tool:** <https://immunology-hub.emergent.host/>

To compile this landscape, data from various sources is curated in collaboration with international partners to provide a comprehensive overview of what candidate vaccines and treatments are available in the event of an epidemic or pandemic. Information is compiled from multiple publicly accessible sources, including clinical trial registries, regulatory authority announcements, scientific publications, manufacturer communications, partner organization databases, and verified direct submissions. WHO does not independently verify all reported data but performs quality checks where possible.

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### **Priority pathogen Families and Collaborative Open Research Consortia (CORCs)**

To implement the pathogen-family prioritization approach to epidemic and pandemic preparedness, WHO and several leading research institutions worldwide have launched the Collaborative Open Research Consortia (CORCs) as international research network of networks organized around priority pathogen families. Each CORC is coordinated by leading institutions acting as hubs and conveners, typically supported by WHO Collaborating Centres.

These consortia represent a major progress in the scientific approach, shifting from a centralized, pathogen-specific model to a decentralized, collaborative framework designed to anticipate emerging threats and accelerate the research and development of medical countermeasures.

CORCs are the primary mechanism for developing and executing the R&D Roadmaps. They provide a structured way to close major knowledge gaps across regions and science disciplines. Their holistic approach ensures that policies relating to prevention, preparedness and response are tailored to local circumstances by integrating different critical dimensions, such as governance's collaboration, equitable access, social sciences and the study of human-animal-ecosystem interactions.

The consortium approach facilitates knowledge integration through systematic compilation of research gaps and priorities across family members; resource optimization through coordinated research efforts that avoid duplication while ensuring comprehensive coverage; rapid mobilization via pre-established networks that can quickly pivot to emerging threats within their assigned families; and capacity building through transparent and open scientific exchanges and could result in increased and sustained investment in research infrastructure and expertise in developing countries.

### **Current list of CORCs (as of March 2026)**

The widespread geographic distribution of the viral and bacterial families and pathogens that can cause the next epidemic or pandemic, with several known to circulate across diverse nations and regions globally, underscores the pivotal role of global collaboration and the advantages in linking national and regional R&D actions and networks. Significantly, this strategy advocates for decentralized collaborative approaches and supporting research efforts in areas critical for

pandemic research preparedness. This comprehensive approach aims to foster international collaboration by establishing a global framework for researchers, developers, policymakers, funders, manufacturers, and institutions, fostering a collaborative space to advance research across all Viral and Bacterial Families, as well as R&D for Priority and Prototype pathogens.

| <b>Priority Family / Threat</b>   | <b>Host Institution</b>   | <b>Country</b>                             | <b>Access current version of R&amp;D Roadmaps</b>   | <b>CORC contact to express interest in contributing to the scientific deliberations</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Arenaviridae</b>   | UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)   | United Kingdom                             | <a href="https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation-r-d-roadmap-for-arenavirus-medical-countermeasures">https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation-r-d-roadmap-for-arenavirus-medical-countermeasures</a>   | <a href="mailto:arena.corc@ukhsa.gov.uk">arena.corc@ukhsa.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Priority Bacteria Pathogens</b><br><i>(Vibrio cholerae, Yersinia Pestis, Shigella dysenteriae, Salmonella enterica non typhoidal, Klebsiella pneumoniae)</i> | Aga Khan University<br>London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)   | Pakistan<br><br>United Kingdom             |   |   |
| <b>Bunyavirales</b><br><i>(Sub-families include Hantaviridae, Nairoviridae, Peribunyaviridae, Phenuiviridae)</i>  | UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Center of Biomedical Advanced Vaccine Research and Development for Preparedness and Response (SCARDA)</li> <li>Institut Pasteur de Dakar (IPD)</li> </ul> | United Kingdom<br><br>Japan<br><br>Senegal | <a href="https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation---r-d-roadmap-for-oropouche-medical-countermeasures">https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation---r-d-roadmap-for-oropouche-medical-countermeasures</a> | <a href="mailto:bunya.corc@ukhsa.gov.uk">bunya.corc@ukhsa.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Coronaviridae</b>  | Programme for Research in Epidemic Preparedness and Response (PREPARE)  | Singapore                                  | <a href="https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation-r-d-roadmap-for-coronavirus-medical-countermeasures">https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-public-consultation-r-d-roadmap-for-coronavirus-medical-countermeasures</a> | <a href="mailto:ncid.corc.cov@nhghealth.com.sg">ncid.corc.cov@nhghealth.com.sg</a>  |
| <b>Filoviridae</b>  | Agence Nationale de Recherche sur le Sida et les Maladies Infectieuses Emergents (ANRS-MIE)   | France                                     |   | <a href="https://anrs.fr/parteneriats/anrs-mie-coordination-corc-filovirus-oms-menaces-epidemiques/">https://anrs.fr/parteneriats/anrs-mie-coordination-corc-filovirus-oms-menaces-epidemiques/</a> |
| <b>Flaviviridae</b>   | Fiocruz Foundation  | Brazil                                     |   | <a href="mailto:corc.flaviviridae@fiocruz.br">corc.flaviviridae@fiocruz.br</a>  |

| <b>Priority Family / Threat</b> | <b>Host Institution</b>   | <b>Country</b>                               | <b>Access current version of R&amp;D Roadmaps</b> | <b>CORC contact to express interest in contributing to the scientific deliberations</b> |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Paramyxoviridae</b>          | Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)   | India  |   |   |
| <b>Poxviridae</b>               | Institut National pour la Recherche Biomédicale (INRB)<br>Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI) | Democratic Republic of Congo<br>South Africa |   |   |

The governance structure of CORCs, especially their emphasis on open and equitable participation and representation, offers reflections for the design of more inclusive and transparent mechanisms.

The CORCs, hosted by public institutions worldwide already involve thousands of scientists and stakeholders across the globe, and exemplifies a non-extractive, partnership-based approach that may support the principles underpinning the Pandemic Agreement aims.

The work of the CORCs is supported by crosscutting expert networks: [Ad-hoc expert group focused on disease modelling \(Animal Models\)](#), [Viruses, Reagents and Immune Assays WHO Working Group](#), [Trial Protocol Working Group](#), [Good Participatory Practice](#) .

### **PRIORITY FAMILIES and R&D Roadmaps**

Each CORC has led the development of Family-specific research and development roadmaps through structured scientific consultations covering pathogen biology, animal reservoirs and vectors, epidemiology and surveillance, basic and translational research, medical countermeasure development with regulatory considerations, and evaluation of candidate medical countermeasures in outbreak or pandemic contexts.

Scientists led by independent renowned institutions (via Collaborative Open Research Consortium - CORCs - ) have provide the scientific basis to inform the R&D research process. The information is being reflected in concrete tools including the Viral Family R&D Roadmaps which start from ONE HEALTH and end with manufacturing capacity for medical countermeasures. By preparing R&D priorities for medical countermeasures at the family level, the global community can potentially shorten the time required to respond to emerging threats.

### **PRIORITY FAMILIES and response to epidemics and pandemics**

During outbreaks, as per the WHO [Emergency Response Framework](#), the *Technical Expertise and Health Operations Pillar* must be informed by the best available technical expertise and science and adhere to recognized standards and best practices. Research during outbreaks should adopt an integrated model that combines: (i) Integrated research response with operational outbreak control activities; (ii) Research driven by science and evidence to support addressing priority research questions, and (iii) Strengthening sustainable research capabilities using a government-WHO-academic collaboration model that leverages national institutional research strengths to enhance the impact of the research outcomes.

During outbreaks, the relevant pathogen-family CORC will support rapid scientific coordination to inform research priorities and facilitate collaboration across scientific networks. When an outbreak occurs, and upon activation by WHO,

the CORCs will facilitate rapid scientific consultations that include national and global researchers who provide input on priority research questions to address during the outbreak.

A coordination effort to involve all scientific networks is also activated to support the deployment or adaptation of pre-developed CORE protocols to evaluate candidate MCMs in the context of the outbreak. All R&D coordination is integrated into WHO outbreak response mechanisms (Incident Management System Team)

### Examples of specific research priorities for recent outbreaks

| <b>Priority Family / Threat (for each family include the hyperlink to our respective webpage)</b>   | <b>Pathogen causing the outbreak/year</b><br><a href="#">Disease Outbreak News</a>  | <b>Outbreak specific research priorities</b> | <b>Protocols available for evaluation of MCMs</b> | <b>Link to scientific consultations on research held</b> |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Arenaviridae</b>   | <a href="#">Chapare haemorrhagic fever- the Plurinational State of Bolivia</a><br><a href="#">Lassa fever - Nigeria</a><br><a href="#">Lassa fever - Guinea</a><br><a href="#">Lassa Fever – Togo</a><br><a href="#">Lassa fever – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</a> |  |   |  |
| <b>Bacteria Priority Pathogens</b><br>( <i>Vibrio cholerae</i> , <i>Yersinia Pestis</i> , <i>Shigella dysenteriae</i> , <i>Salmonella enterica non typhoidal</i> , <i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i> ) | <a href="#">Plague - Madagascar</a>   |  |   |  |
| <b>Bunyavirales</b><br>(Sub-families include <i>Hantaviridae</i> , <i>Nairoviridae</i> , <i>Peribunyaviridae</i> , <i>Phenuiviridae</i> )   | <a href="#">Rift Valley fever- Mauritania and Senegal</a><br><a href="#">Oropouche virus disease - Region of the Americas</a><br><a href="#">Oropouche virus disease - Cuba</a><br><a href="#">Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever - Iraq</a>   |  |   |  |

| <b>Priority Family / Threat (for each family include the hyperlink to our respective webpage)</b> | <b>Pathogen causing the outbreak/year</b><br><a href="#">Disease Outbreak News</a>   | <b>Outbreak specific research priorities</b> | <b>Protocols available for evaluation of MCMs</b>  | <b>Link to scientific consultations on research held</b> |
|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <a href="#">Rift Valley fever – Kenya</a>  |  |  |  |
| <b>Coronaviridae</b>  | <a href="#">Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus - Global update</a><br><a href="#">Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</a><br><a href="#">Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus –Oman</a><br><a href="#">Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus –Saudi Arabia</a><br><a href="#">Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – Qatar</a><br><a href="#">Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – United Arab Emirates</a><br><a href="#">Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – Saudi Arabia</a><br><a href="#">SARS-CoV-2 Variants</a> |  | <a href="https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/solidarity-trial-plus-protocol">https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/solidarity-trial-plus-protocol</a><br><a href="#">Solidarity Trial Vaccines. An international randomised trial of candidate vaccines against COVID-19</a> |  |
| <b>Filoviridae</b>  | <a href="#">Marburg virus disease- Ethiopia</a><br><a href="#">Ebola virus disease –</a>   |  | <a href="#">CORE Protocol - A phase 1/2/3 study to evaluate the safety, tolerability, immunogenicity, and efficacy of vaccine candidates</a>   |  |

| Priority Family / Threat (for each family include the hyperlink to our respective webpage) | Pathogen causing the outbreak/year <a href="#">Disease Outbreak News</a>   | Outbreak specific research priorities | Protocols available for evaluation of MCMs   | Link to scientific consultations on research held |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|
|  | <a href="#">Democratic Republic of the Congo</a><br><a href="#">Sudan virus disease – Uganda</a><br><a href="#">Marburg virus disease– United Republic of Tanzania</a><br><a href="#">Marburg virus disease - Rwanda</a><br><a href="#">Marburg virus disease - Equatorial Guinea</a><br><a href="#">Ebola disease caused by Sudan ebolavirus – Uganda</a><br><a href="#">Ebola Virus Disease –Democratic Republic of the Congo</a><br><a href="#">Marburg virus disease - Ghana</a><br><a href="#">Ebola virus disease – Democratic Republic of the Congo</a><br><a href="#">Marburg virus disease - Guinea</a><br><a href="#">Ebola virus disease – Guinea</a> |                                       | <a href="#">against (Filoviruses) virus disease in healthy individuals at risk of (Filovirus) virus disease</a><br><a href="#">Solidarity Partners – Platform adaptive randomized trial for new and repurposed Filovirus treatments – Core Trial Protocol</a><br><a href="#">solidarity_sudan-ebolavirus_treatment-protocol_webversion.pdf</a> |   |
| <b>Flaviviridae</b>  | <a href="#">Zika virus disease – India</a><br><a href="#">West Nile virus- Barbados</a><br><a href="#">Dengue – Iran (Islamic Republic of)</a>   |                                       | <a href="https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/efficacy-trials-of-zikv-vaccines--endpoints--trial-design--site-selection">https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/efficacy-trials-of-zikv-vaccines--endpoints--trial-design--site-selection</a>  |   |

| <b>Priority Family / Threat (for each family include the hyperlink to our respective webpage)</b> | <b>Pathogen causing the outbreak/year</b><br><a href="#">Disease Outbreak News</a>   | <b>Outbreak specific research priorities</b>   | <b>Protocols available for evaluation of MCMs</b>   | <b>Link to scientific consultations on research held</b> |
|---|--|--|---|--|
|   | <a href="#">Dengue - Chad</a><br><a href="#">Dengue - São Tomé and Príncipe</a><br><a href="#">Dengue - Timor-Leste</a><br><a href="#">Dengue fever – Pakistan</a><br><a href="#">Zika Virus Disease – India</a> |  |   |  |
| <b>Paramyxoviridae</b>  | <a href="#">Nipah: Nipah virus infection - Bangladesh</a><br><a href="#">Nipah virus disease - India</a><br><a href="#">Nipah virus disease - India</a>  |  |   |  |
| <b>Poxviridae</b>   | <a href="#">Mpox – South Africa</a><br><a href="#">Mpox - Democratic Republic of the Congo</a><br><a href="#">Multi-country monkeypox outbreak: situation update</a>   | <a href="#">a-coordinated-research-roadmap-monkeypox-virus-immediate-research-next-steps-to-contribute-to-control-the-outbreak.pdf</a> | <a href="https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/core-protocol---an-international-adaptive-multi-country-randomized-placebo-controlled--double-blinded-trial-of-the-safety-and-efficacy-of-treatments-for-patients-with-monkeypox-virus-disease">https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/core-protocol---an-international-adaptive-multi-country-randomized-placebo-controlled--double-blinded-trial-of-the-safety-and-efficacy-of-treatments-for-patients-with-monkeypox-virus-disease</a> |  |

**Tools available to support the development of protocols to evaluate candidate MCMs in the context of outbreaks**

A selection of some of the generic documents is listed below.

| <b>Full title</b>   | <b>Citation</b>   | <b>Brief description of content</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| Creating a Framework for Conducting Randomized Clinical Trials during Disease | Dean NE, Gsell PS, Brookmeyer R, et al. Creating a framework for conducting randomized clinical | Methodological piece proposing a CORE-protocol framework for randomized trials that can be activated across successive outbreaks, addressing ethics, logistics, |

| <b>Full title</b>   | <b>Citation</b>   | <b>Brief description of content</b>  |
|---|---|--|
| Outbreaks   | N Engl J Med. 2020;382(20):1898-1903.<br><a href="https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7490833/">https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7490833/</a> [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih]  | endpoints and adaptive features in emergency settings.   |
| Design of Vaccine Efficacy Trials During Public Health Emergencies                        | Dean NE, Gsell PS, Brookmeyer R, et al. Design of vaccine efficacy trials during public health emergencies.<br>Sci Transl Med. 2019;11(499)<br><a href="https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/scitranslmed.aat0360">https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/scitranslmed.aat0360</a> [science]  | Provides detailed guidance on designing vaccine efficacy trials in epidemics comparing individually randomized, cluster, stepped-wedge and ring-vaccination designs, and discussing feasibility, ethics and statistical power when incidence is uncertain.   |
| Considerations for the Design of Vaccine Efficacy Trials During Public Health Emergencies | Dean NE, Gsell PS, Henao-Restrepo AM, Longini IM Jr, Egger M, Edmunds WJ, et al. Considerations for the design of vaccine efficacy trials during public health emergencies.<br>Epidemiol Infect. 2019;147:e258<br><a href="https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6613811/">https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6613811/</a> [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih]                             | Expanding on design issues for vaccine trials in emergencies, using Blueprint priority diseases to illustrate choices in endpoints, randomisation, sample size, and data monitoring under outbreak conditions.   |
| Choices in Vaccine Trial Design in Epidemics of Emerging Infections                       | <a href="https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002632">https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002632</a> [journals.plos]   | Reviews and compares alternative vaccine trial designs (individually randomized, cluster, stepped-wedge, ring, observational) for emerging infections, highlighting trade-offs between speed, power, feasibility and ethical considerations in epidemic contexts.                                      |
| Global Research and Innovation for Health Emergencies – R&D Blueprint for Epidemics       | WHO R&D Blueprint approach to clinical research during outbreaks and pandemics<br><a href="https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/r-d-blueprint-meetings/global-research-and-innovation-for-health-emergencies.pdf">https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/r-d-blueprint-meetings/global-research-and-innovation-for-health-emergencies.pdf</a> [cdn.who] | Describes the WHO R&D Blueprint approach to clinical research during outbreaks and pandemics, including co-development of large multi-country clinical trials with countries, prioritisation of investigational products, and use of pre-approved CORE protocols and national research teams.[cdn.who] |
| Research and Innovation as Part of the Response to Outbreaks                              | Research and innovation as part of the response to outbreaks. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 Feb 14.<br><a href="https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/blue-print/ana-maria-henao_whomarvac_research-during-epidemics_14feb23.pdf">https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/blue-print/ana-maria-henao_whomarvac_research-during-epidemics_14feb23.pdf</a> [cdn.who]  | Explaining how research (including vaccine and therapeutic trials) is embedded in outbreak response, emphasising R&D Blueprint priority diseases, adaptive trials, and the need for pre-agreed protocols and governance  |
| Viral Families Approach – WHO R&D Blueprint for Epidemics                                 | Viral families approach – development of family-specific R&D roadmaps and CORE protocols WHO R&D Blueprint for epidemics. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 Jan.  | Outlines the viral-family strategy for R&D Blueprint, including development of family-specific R&D roadmaps and CORE protocols to ensure rapid initiation of clinical trials during future epidemics and pandemics   |

| <b>Full title</b> | <b>Citation</b>   | <b>Brief description of content</b> |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
|                   | <a href="https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/consultation-rdb/who-r-d-blueprint-for-epidemics.pdf">https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/consultation-rdb/who-r-d-blueprint-for-epidemics.pdf</a> [cdn.who] |                                     |

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