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Comments by [Brian Shilhavy](#), [Health Impact News](#)

May 27, 2020

Despite the fact that they are currently embattled in two federal lawsuits for fraud regarding the development of their MMR and Gardasil vaccines, Merck jumped into the COVID-19 race and nabbed \$38 BILLION of American taxpayer funds to develop COVID products, including vaccines, it was announced today.

The transfer of American wealth to the [criminal pharmaceutical industry](#) continues as millions are out of work and non-pharmaceutical businesses go bankrupt.

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Trailing Big Pharma peers, Merck inks deals to advance COVID-19 drugs, vaccines

by [Eric Sagonowsky](#)  
[FiercePharma](#)

Excerpts:

For months, as the world's largest vaccine companies jumped into COVID-19 research and inked partnerships, Merck was conspicuously quiet. That changed in late April when the drug giant unveiled some of its early efforts—and now, Merck is publicly unveiling a vaccine partnership with the U.S.

government, a biotech buyout and an R&D pact for a potential therapeutic.

In an update Tuesday, Merck said it's partnering with nonprofit research group IAVI on a preclinical vaccine candidate based on the same platform used by Merck's Ervebo, the world's only licensed Ebola shot.

With the help of \$38 million in backing from the U.S. government's BARDA agency, the pair aim to start human trials "later in 2020." The idea is to deliver rapid immunity with just one dose of the potential shot. The two will work through development steps together, and Merck will handle regulatory filings.

Meanwhile, Merck is buying privately held Swiss biotech Themis for access to a potential COVID-19 vaccine developed by the biotech and its partner, Institut Pasteur. And on the therapeutic side, Merck said it's teaming with Ridgeback Bio on a potential COVID-19 antiviral.

The moves are Merck's first public efforts amid biopharma's larger war on COVID-19, and they follow word in April that the drugmaker was embarking on a "broad-based development program" targeting the novel coronavirus. Merck had "teams of scientists" scanning drugs and vaccines that might work, the company said at the time, as discussions with potential partners were ongoing.

Read the full article at [FiercePharma](#)