



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on March 12, 2020

Market Solutions: Japanese Pharmaceutical Company Working on Plasma-based Treatment for COVID-19

As of today there are very few treatment options for those suffering from a severe case of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The Mayo Clinic, one of the world's premier medical institutions, [puts it this way](#): "Currently, no antiviral medication is recommended to treat COVID-19. Treatment is directed at relieving symptoms."



[According to the Centers for Disease Control](#), many patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and resulting pneumonia need "intensive care for respiratory support." Other treatment options for the severely ill include high-flow oxygen therapy and "advanced organ support with endotracheal intubation and mechanical ventilation" and in some cases, "extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO)." But these interventions do not treat the disease itself. Like the Mayo Clinic, the CDC notes, "No specific treatment for COVID-19 is currently available."

There is an obvious and demonstrated need for a treatment, however. If the market economy operates as theorized, when a need stimulates demand for a product or service, suppliers of solutions that might meet that need work to bring relevant products and services to the market. In the case of the desperate need for treatment options for COVID-19, this is exactly what is happening.

On March 4, Japanese biopharmaceutical giant Takeda announced that it was pursuing a blood plasma-based treatment for those suffering from COVID-19. In a [press release](#), the company announced that it would "share with members of the United States Congress that it is initiating the development of an anti-SARS-CoV-2 polyclonal hyperimmune globulin (H-IG) to treat high-risk individuals with COVID-19." The company also noted that it would investigate its current products to determine if any may have potential to be effective treatments.

The potential new treatment, currently called TAK-888, might work by leveraging "pathogen-specific antibodies from plasma collected from recovered patients or vaccinated donors in the future," the company said. "By transferring the antibodies to a new patient, it may help that person's immune system respond to the infection and increase their chance of recovery."

Takeda already has extensive experience in developing plasma-based therapies. It operates the BioLife global plasma collection network and has over 140 plasma centers in the United States and Europe.



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“Our heritage, combined with our scale, expertise and capabilities, uniquely position Takeda to realize the potential of plasma-derived therapies, such as TAK-888,” said Dr. Chris Morabito, Takeda’s head of research and development.” In addition to efforts undertaken by Takeda, other pharmaceutical companies are pursuing treatment options for COVID-19. One of these is Gilead Sciences, a biotechnology company that researches antiviral drugs.

One of its research products is the antiviral remdesivir. [According to the company](#), “Remdesivir has demonstrated in vitro and in vivo activity in animal models against the viral pathogens MERS and SARS, which are also coronaviruses and are structurally similar to COVID-19.” The company has started two “Phase 3 clinical studies to evaluate the safety and efficacy of remdesivir in adults diagnosed with COVID-19 following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) rapid review and acceptance of Gilead’s investigational new drug (IND) filing,” the company noted on its website.

Remdesivir, in fact, may prove very effective in fighting off SARS-CoV-2. Already in February, Chinese researchers [reported](#) to the journal *Cell Research* that the drug was one of two that “potently blocked virus infection.”

It is very early in these and other efforts to research and develop treatments for COVID-19. But the market is already proving to be quickly responsive to the need for a solution to the pandemic. Firms such as Takeda, Gilead, and many others around the world employ large numbers of scientists dedicated to finding novel and innovative solutions to problems. Left unfettered by unnecessary regulation within a free market economy, these companies and their teams of researchers will be instrumental in saving lives during the current pandemic.

Photo shows electronic microscope image of SARS-CoV-2: NIAID-RML via AP



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