



## Pentagon Developing Technologies to End Pandemics “Forever”

As the whole world is looking for solutions to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, Pentagon scientists have some groundbreaking innovations to present.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), a secret agency established at the height of the Cold War and tasked with protecting soldiers from contagious diseases and biological weapons, has created a “subdermal implant” to detect COVID-19 infection. The implant not only tests one’s blood for viruses, but also assists in removing the viruses from one’s blood when used in conjunction with a dialysis machine (described below).



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“We challenge the research community to come up with solutions that may sound like science fiction. And we’re very willing to take chances with high-risk investments that may not work. But if they do, we can completely transform the landscape,” Dr. Matt Hepburn, a retired Army infectious disease physician, told [60 Minutes](#).

Dr. Hepburn said military scientists were inspired by the struggle to stem the virus’ spread onboard the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* last March, [where](#) 1,271 crew members tested positive for the coronavirus. The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with a crew of 4,779 pulled into Guam after some sailors contracted COVID-19. One sailor died from COVID-19 complications while the ship was at Guam and the crew was quarantined and isolated on the island.

Such an outbreak could have been prevented “if everyone on board had their health monitored with this subdermal implant, now in late-stage testing.” Dr. Hepburn describes the implant: “It’s not some dreaded government microchip to track your every move, but a tissue-like gel engineered to continuously test your blood ... like a ‘check engine’ light.” Sailors would get the signal, then self-administer a blood draw and test themselves on site, with results being ready within three to five minutes. “As you truncate that time, as you diagnose and treat, what you do is you stop the infection in its tracks.”

Despite the promising outcome, military personnel could be skeptical of these innovations. In February, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that a third of troops have refused to take the COVID-19 vaccine, citing concerns that the vaccine contains a microchip devised to monitor recipients, that it will permanently disable the body’s immune system, or that it is some form of government control. Now, when the Pentagon offers to implant military personnel with actual microchips, those personnel can hardly be expected to be enthusiastic.

Another bit of technology highlighted during the *60 Minutes* segment that could directly affect viruses such as COVID-19 was a dialysis machine that could be used to filter a patient’s blood until the virus is



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 13, 2021

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removed from the body. A military spouse dubbed “Patient 16” reportedly went through this process after experiencing a serious illness that caused septic shock and organ failure. After four days of treatment, researchers claim she made a full recovery. The FDA has authorized the filter for emergency use, and it has been used to treat nearly 300 critically ill patients.

DARPA isn’t the only Pentagon agency working on revolutionary medical technologies. There is the Joint Pathology Institute in D.C. that studies tissue samples from soldiers and sailors infected with pathogens from all over the world, such as the damaged lung of a recent COVID-19 victim. Colonel Joel Moncur, who directs the institute, says they can manufacture RNA antibody antidotes fast enough to stop a pandemic. It was his lab that delivered an antibody treatment to drug-maker AstraZeneca in a record 25 days (the company is now facing scrutiny over the blood-clot concerns as a side effect of the shot, with [several countries](#) curbing its use last month). Messenger RNA, the genetic tool DARPA helped pioneer that was used to make the coronavirus vaccine in such a short time, is believed to allow factories to churn out millions of doses a day.

Some Pentagon scientists are going even further. With the spread of new coronavirus variants, the Army’s Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad is testing an approach to stop them all: “We’re trying to not just make a vaccine for this virus, we’re trying to make a vaccine for the whole family of coronaviruses. This is the core of our vaccine. We engineer the spike so that we can attach it to this protein.” If his concept, now in clinical trials, proves successful, Dr. Modjarrad says in five years a single vaccine could defeat all coronaviruses. That included many common colds, SARS-CoV-2, and thousands of others.

As enthusiastic as the military experts are, many civilian doctors have raised serious concerns about the safety and the long-term medical implications of vaccines using genetically modified RNA, with some even [suggesting](#) they can cause chronic inflammation and lead to organ failures and death.



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