

France's Sanofi expands mRNA drive with US firm purchase

August 3 2021



Sanofi will buy Translate Bio, with which it has been working to develop an mRNA Covid jab, for \$3.2 billion.

France's pharmaceutical giant Sanofi, which has lagged behind rivals in developing new generation mRNA Covid-19 vaccines, on Tuesday said

it has purchased a US firm specialising in the technology.

Sanofi will buy Translate Bio, with which it has been working to develop an mRNA Covid jab, for \$3.2 billion (2.7 billion euros), the company said in a statement.

Sanofi was left trailing in the race to break out a Covid-19 [vaccine](#) in 2020, as rivals Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna used pioneering mRNA technology to develop jabs in record time.

In late June, it said it would invest two billion euros in the technology by setting up a "centre of excellence" employing 400 people at its laboratories in the US city of Cambridge and Marcy-L'Etoile near the French city of Lyon.

Messenger RNA technology works by providing [human cells](#) with the genetic instructions to make a surface protein of the coronavirus, which trains the [immune system](#) to recognise the real virus.

Making a traditional vaccine is a longer process that normally involves developing a weakened form of a pathogen.

Sanofi, which initially went the traditional route, is still racing to make up ground in the colossal market for Covid jabs.

The European Medicines Agency only started a "rolling review" of Sanofi's coronavirus jab, developed with British firm GSK, on July 20.

Sanofi, which has been working on developing an mRNA vaccine with Translate Bio, based in Lexington, Massachusetts, said it was betting on the new technology beyond the coronavirus pandemic.

"Our goal is to unlock the potential of mRNA in other strategic areas

such as immunology, oncology, and [rare diseases](#) in addition to vaccines," Sanofi chief executive Paul Hudson said in a statement.

Sanofi is not alone in such ambitions.

Germany's BioNTech, which developed the coronavirus vaccine with US giant Pfizer, announced in July that it aimed to start trialling a malaria vaccine using the mRNA breakthrough technology.

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Citation: France's Sanofi expands mRNA drive with US firm purchase (2021, August 3)
retrieved 31 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-08-france-sanofi-mrna-firm.html>

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