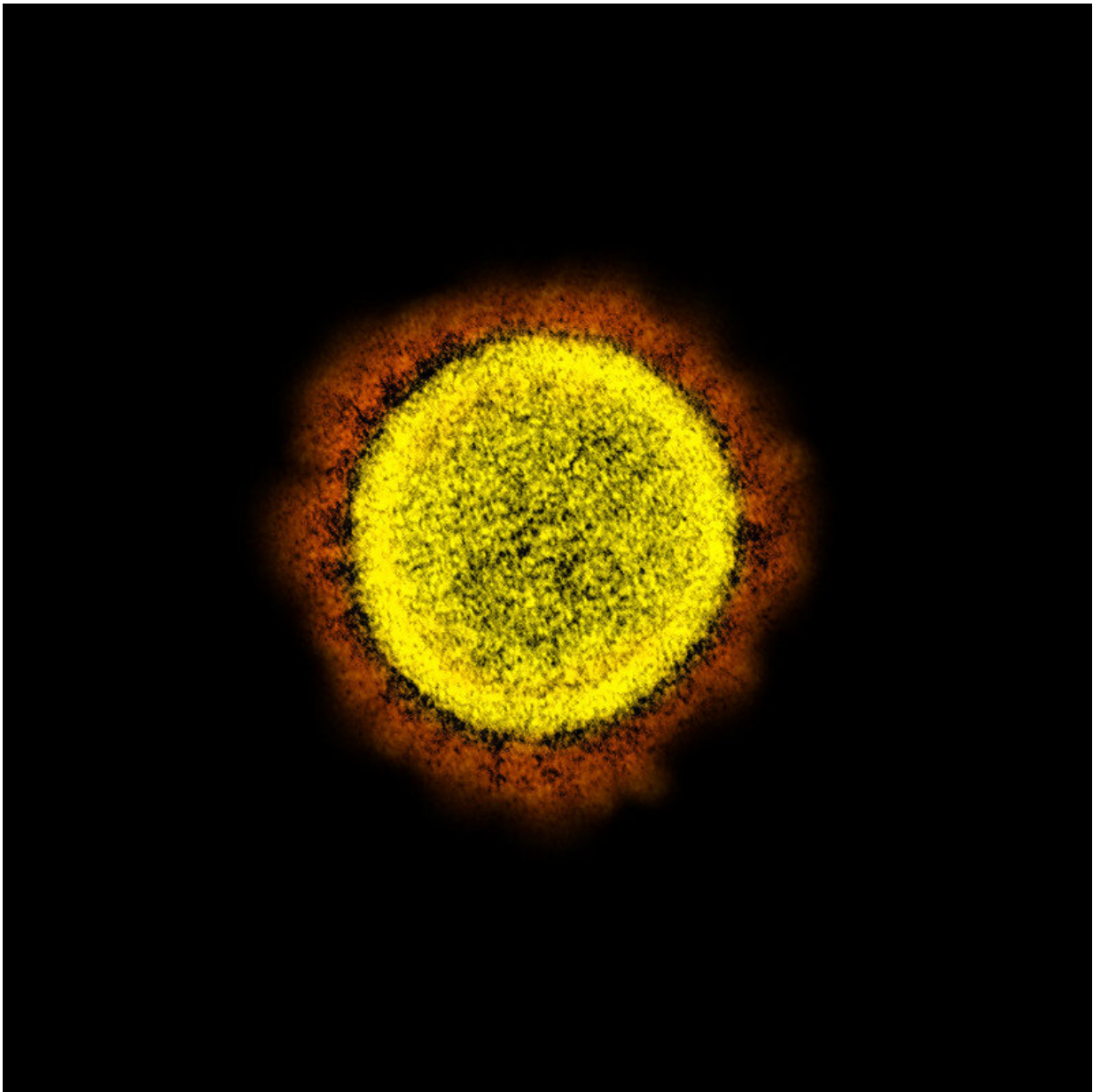# Research team identifies potential drug to treat SARS-CoV-2

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Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 Transmission electron micrograph of SARS-CoV-2 virus particles, isolated from a patient. Image captured and color-enhanced at the NIAID Integrated Research Facility (IRF) in Fort Detrick, Maryland. Credit: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, NIH

A federally approved heart medication shows significant effectiveness in interfering with SARS-CoV-2 entry into the human cell host, according to a new study by a research team from Texas A&M University and The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB).

The medication bepridil, which goes by the trade name Vascor, is currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat angina, a heart condition.

The team's leaders are College of Science professor Wenshe Ray Liu, professor and holder of the Gradipore Chair in the Department of Chemistry at Texas A&M, and Chien-Te Kent Tseng, professor and director of the SARS/MERS/COVID-19 Laboratory at UTMB. Liu also holds joint faculty positions in Texas A&M's colleges of medicine and agriculture and [life sciences](link).

"Only one medication is currently available, Remdesivir, to provide limited benefits to COVID-19 patients, and the virus may easily evade it," Liu said. "Finding alternative medicines is imperative. Our team screened more than 30 FDA/European Medicines Agency approved drugs for their ability to inhibit SARS-COV-2's entry into [human cells](link). The study found bepridil to offer the most potential for treatment of COVID-19. As a result, we are advocating for the serious consideration of using bepridil in clinical tests related to SARS-CoV-2."

The Texas A&M-UTMB study is now available at the website of the

peer-reviewed *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (*PNAS*) and is scheduled for print publication on March 9.

The team, which includes six other researchers from Texas A&M and four from UTMB, now plans to advance their work to animal models with a potential for clinical trials.

  More information: Erol C. Vatansever et al, Bepridil is potent against SARS-CoV-2 in vitro, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2021). DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2012201118

Provided by Texas A&M University