



A Message From Our CEO: Innovation in a Time of Crisis

By Eileen R. Heisman, President & CEO

In this time of uncertainty, several fundamental truths give me hope. First and foremost, this crisis is catalyzing innovation. New discoveries are taking place, and treatments and vaccines are being developed at a tremendously accelerated pace. We owe this fact not only to the urgency of the moment but to another truth: Our efforts to share information and collaborate are stronger than ever. From public companies to philanthropic institutions, we are joining forces to accomplish groundbreaking work. Finally, the generosity of the public—whether demonstrated through donations to community organizations, liberal tips to hourly workers, or grants to disease research—tells me that we will achieve a better, safer tomorrow.

Innovation has accelerated

As I write, scientists are hard at work on innovative solutions to this pandemic, and their discoveries are taking place at record speed. When SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) first broke out in late 2002, it took scientists more than a year to sequence the genome of the virus. With the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it took less than a month, thanks to breakthrough technologies that allowed genome sequencing to happen faster and at a lower cost. Almost immediately, scientists developed diagnostic tests based on the virus's genetic code. Now they are at work developing faster, more accessible testing.

Drugs that were developed to treat other diseases are being tested and tried on patients with COVID-19. For instance, the antiviral drug Favipiravir, developed by a Japanese company to treat the flu, is reportedly showing promise in reducing the duration of the COVID-19 virus in patients. Meanwhile, there are scores of new vaccines in the pipeline to prevent people from acquiring the virus.

Collaboration is fueling innovation

By working together, companies like Eli Lilly and the biotech AbCellera are leveraging their strengths to develop therapeutic antibody products for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19. This powerful [partnership](#) combines AbCellera's rapid pandemic response platform with Lilly's powerful manufacturing and distribution capacity.

Philanthropists are collaborating in significant ways, too. During the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic, there was not enough funding to complete testing and production of a vaccine—until generous donors stepped in with additional capital. To help finance and coordinate vaccine development against future epidemics, the [Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation](#) (CEPI) was formed to unite the efforts of public, private and philanthropic sectors.

Today, many of the most promising vaccines being developed come from CEPI-funded research. For instance, the new COVID-19 vaccine that has already entered a [phase 1 trial](#) on humans was funded in part by CEPI. This vaccine, created by the biotech Moderna and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), is being tested on 45 healthy adult volunteers, with the first participant receiving the vaccine on March 16. I'm proud to say that some of our donors have contributed to this groundbreaking work through grant recommendations to CEPI.

A Message From Our CEO: Innovation in a Time of Crisis (continued)

Generosity ignites hope

It is the overwhelming spirit of generosity that gives me further hope right now. When called on to give, our donors—and indeed all Americans—answer with an outpouring of support. During the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans helped their neighbors like never before, donating billions of dollars to families who lost loved ones. Four years later, when Hurricane Katrina struck, Americans again gave in record numbers to support the victims of that disaster. During unsettling and even frightening times, giving is a way to affirm hope—and work toward lasting solutions.

If you need assistance making a contribution to your donor-advised fund or recommending a grant to a nonprofit, National Philanthropic Trust is here to facilitate your charitable giving, just as we always have been. For those of you who wish to support the development of diagnostic tests and treatments for COVID-19, fund vaccine research and disease outbreak prevention, or give to vulnerable communities, among other areas of need, please visit our well-researched [giving resources](#). You can also call us at (888) 878-7900 or email us at npt@nptrust.org.

Eileen R. Heisman, ACFRE, is the President and CEO of NPT. She is a nationally recognized expert on charitable and planned giving. Ms. Heisman has been named six times by NonProfit Times as one of their Power and Influence Top 50, most recently in 2019.

NPT does not provide legal or tax advice. This blog post is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be, and shall not be relied upon as, legal or tax advice. The applicability of information contained here may vary depending on individual circumstances.