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# Biochemical companies receive grant to develop COVID-19 therapeutic

The U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) recently awarded a two-year \$37.6 million grant to a team of scientists to develop an anti-SARS-CoV-2-specific DNA-encoded monoclonal antibody (dMAb) as a therapeutic and preventive treatment for COVID-19.

DARPA is the U.S. Department of Defense and the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense's research and development agency.

INOVIO, a biotechnology company focused on designing DNA medicines to treat and prevent infectious diseases and cancer, the University of Pennsylvania, AstraZeneca, The Wistar Institute, and Indiana University received the grant.

INOVIO and Wistar will construct COVID-19 dMAb candidates mirroring AstraZeneca's traditional recombinant monoclonal antibody candidates. The dMAb candidates will then be advanced into preclinical studies and human clinical trials within one year of funding.

"This public-private partnership allows us to not only broaden the scope and application of our DNA medicines platform across the spectrum of needed COVID-19 treatment modalities but also to open the door for better patient administration and more cost effective, scalable production of monoclonal antibody products for other infectious diseases and cancer." Dr. J. Joseph Kim, INOVIO president and CEO, said. "We are

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