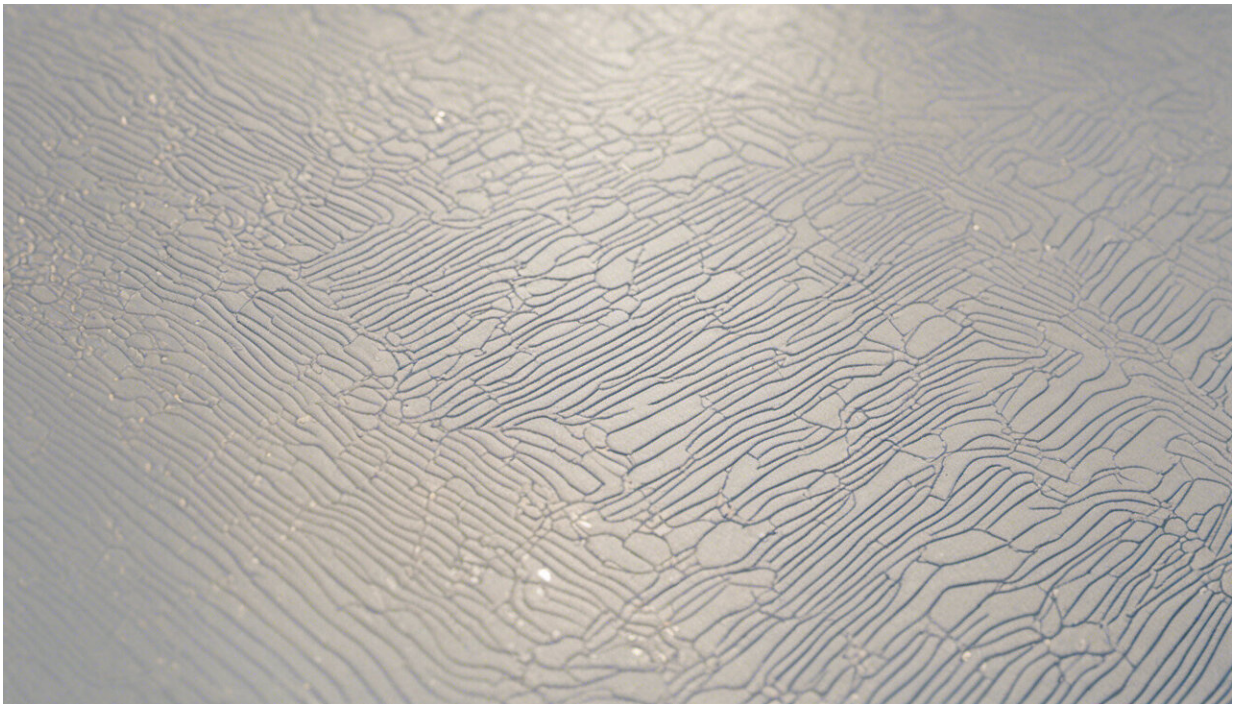


'Universal' influenza vaccine development underway in Europe

December 4 2013



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

A newly launched European project is set to take a major step toward the development of a universal flu vaccine. It aims to counter the emergence of new strains and seasonal epidemics.

The viral infection usually strikes in colder months with [seasonal](#)

[influenza](#) being responsible for around 3 - 5 million cases of severe illness and 250,000 to 500,000 deaths worldwide.

Due to its rapid spread particularly among high risk population groups, [influenza](#) remains a serious public health problem. To date, the most effective way to prevent the disease or severe symptoms is annual vaccination but current vaccines only offer limited protection against evolving strains of the infection.

To overcome these weaknesses, a public-private partnership comprising seven renowned organisations from Europe joined forces under the EDUFLUVAC project to develop a broad-spectrum, long-lasting [vaccine](#) against influenza.

EDUFLUVAC launched into action only a month ago and aims to take a novel approach by 'educating' the immune system to cross-recognise common regions within multiple [influenza virus](#) strains.

'Developing a universal [flu vaccine](#) has become a global health priority for preventing the spread of the virus and the emergence of new strains, and we are convinced that EDUFLUVAC will be a major step forward towards achieving this goal', says Othmar Engelhardt, principal investigator at the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control, United Kingdom.'

The research team expects to achieve better protection against epidemic influenza through the development of a vaccine that would not only offer the tremendous advantage of eliminating the need for a seasonal vaccine every year but could also reduce the need for costly annual vaccination campaigns.

Odile Leroy, Executive Director of the European Vaccine Initiative and coordinator of EDUFLUVAC, says: 'Low and middle-income countries

currently have minimal [influenza vaccination](#) programmes. Thus, the development of a vaccine that elicits broad long-lasting defence would facilitate vaccination campaigns and confer protection against influenza in hitherto untargeted groups with limited health care'.

The four-year project is coordinated by the European Vaccine Initiative headquartered in Germany and was awarded a grant of EUR 4.6 million in EU funding.

More information: Project factsheet:
cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/110279_en.html

Provided by CORDIS

Citation: 'Universal' influenza vaccine development underway in Europe (2013, December 4)
retrieved 7 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-universal-influenza-vaccine-underway-europe.html>

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