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# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Inside C2

Wednesday, April 07, 2021

# Bezos, Musk top Forbes' record-setting billionaire list

(Reuters) - Forbes' annual world's billionaires list includes a record-breaking 2,755 billionaires, with Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos topping it for the fourth consecutive year, the media company said on Tuesday.

The ranks of the ultra-wealthy are expanding after a year in which the coronavirus pandemic upended world economies and threatened the livelihoods of people across the globe.

This year's billionaires are worth a combined $13.1 trillion, up from $8 trillion last year, Forbes said.
"The very, very rich got very, very richer," said Forbes' Chief Content Officer Randall Lane, in an interview with Reuters Video News.

Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk jumped into second spot on the list, up from 31st last year.
Bernard Arnault, chief executive of luxury goods firm LVMH, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg round out the top five of the world's richest billionaires.
Investor and business tycoon Warren Buffett fell out of the top five for the first time in over two decades, as tech executives dominate the Forbes rankings.

This year's list has 493 newcomers, including Whitney Wolfe Herd, chief executive of dating app Bumble, which went public this year.

# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

## CORONAVIRUS DIARY

04/06/2021

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# We Are The Nation Of Immigrants

Today we really appreciate all the leaders from the different communities that have come to support the ITC Community Resource Center. This project will open the door for all of us and build a bridge between our community and government.

Since the middle of the 1980's many new immigrants and students came to America including many from China and other Asian countries. According to the latest census, there are over twenty million Asians in the United States with five million of them being Chinese. They were also the earliest immigrants from Asia.

After World War II many immigrants made very outstanding contributions to America's economy and we have become a superpower ever since then. Even today, companies like Google, Zoom and other top high–tech companies are led by immigrants.

We strongly suggest to President Biden to open the door for newcomers. For those students who get their masters, doctorate or PhD degrees, we should issue them permanent residence cards so they can stay to continue with their life's work here in the U.S.

Many people in this country are against a strong immigration policy simply because of their political interest.

After all, we are the nation of immigrants. If we want to keep strong in the future, we need more new blood to build our nation.




Southern DAILY Make Today Different

# Editor's Choice

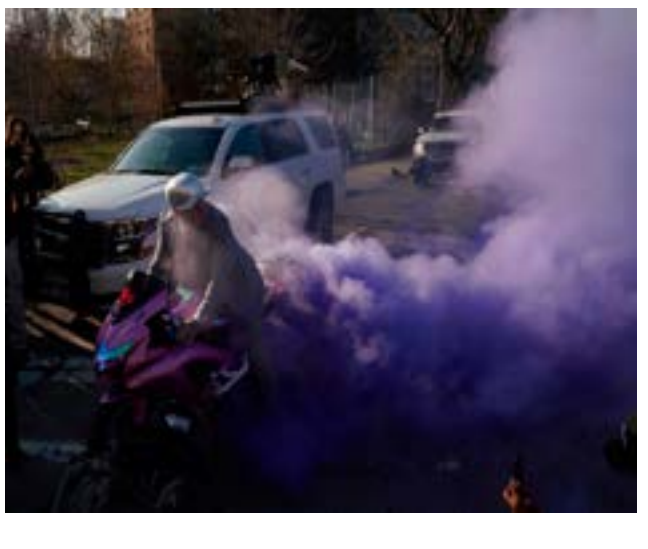
U.S. President Joe Biden stands to deliver his remarks on the tradition of Easter, next to first lady Jill Biden holding a flower and a person wearing an Easter Bunny costume at the Blue Room Balcony of the White House in Washington. REUTERS/Kevin...

Anti-coup protesters burn a Chinese flag in Yangon, Myanmar. REUTERS/Stringer

Norah Miller has her picture taken by her friend Emma McCain as they visit the 50 acres of Ranunculus flowers at "The Flower Fields" in Carlsbad, California. REUTERS/Mike Blake

A view of the fans and the stands during the second inning of the game between the Texas Rangers and the Toronto Blue Jays at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas. Jerome Miron-USA

Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo answers questions on the sixth day of the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin (L) for second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. REUTERS/Jane Rosenberg



People attend a vigil for rapper DMX outside a hospital in White Plains, New York. REUTERS/David 'Dee' Delgado

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

# BUSINESS

## How COVID-19 Can Be Crippled By An Age-Old Blood Thinner

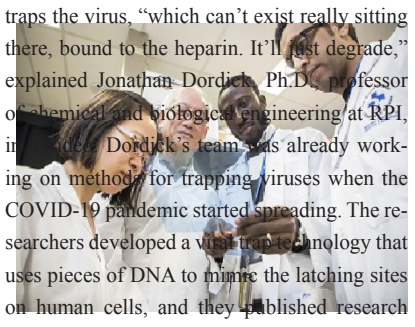
**The blood thinner heparin could be used to trap SARS-CoV-2, effectively neutralizing the virus before it can infect healthy cells, a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute team said. (Maksim Tkachenko/iStock/Getty Images Plus)**

**Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor**

Much of the effort to develop remedies and vaccines to fight COVID-19 has centered around the spike protein that the culprit virus, SARS-CoV-2, uses to invade healthy cells. Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute believe they've found a way to block the spike protein's ability to infect cells—and it involves a 78-year-old blood thinner.

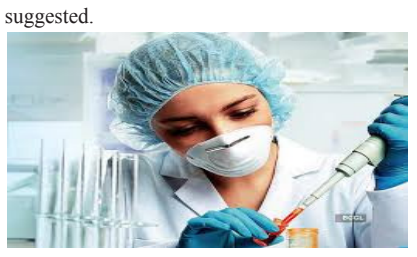
The drug is heparin, which is widely used to treat and prevent blood clots. The RPI team discovered that SARS-CoV-2 binds tightly to heparin, making the drug a potential "decoy" that could serve as a way to neutralize the virus before it can infect healthy cells. They reported the finding (PDF) in the journal Antiviral Research. The RPI researchers made the discovery by studying gene sequencing data for SARS-CoV-2 and recognizing certain characteristics of the spike protein they believed would make it likely to bind to heparin. They tested three variants of the drug, including a non-anticoagulant formulation, against the virus, using computational modeling to define how they bound to the pathogen.

By binding to SARS-CoV-2, the blood thinner traps the virus, "which can't exist really sitting there, bound to the heparin. It'll just degrade," explained Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., professor of chemical and biological engineering at RPI, in a video. Dordick's team was already working on methods for trapping viruses when the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading. The researchers developed a viral trap technology that uses pieces of DNA to mimic the latching sites on human cells, and they published research showing promising early data in dengue, influenza A and Zika.



While looking for ways to translate the viral trap technology to COVID-19, Dordick teamed up with Robert Linhardt, Ph.D., professor of chemistry and chemical biology at RPI, who is well known for his creation of synthetic heparin. Some blood thinners are already being used by physicians treating COVID-19. Demand for Bristol Myers Squibb's Eliquis skyrocketed earlier this year following reports that the drug could prevent strokes in seriously ill patients.

The RPI researchers are proposing that heparin be used as a stopgap measure against COVID-19 until a vaccine is found. The drug could be delivered in an inhaled form to people who have been exposed to COVID-19, they suggested.



"This approach could be used as an early intervention to reduce the infection among people who have tested positive, but aren't yet suffering symptoms," said lead author Linhardt in a statement. "Ultimately, we want a vaccine, but there are many ways to combat a virus, and as we've seen with HIV, with the right combination of therapies, we can control the disease until a vaccine is found." (Courtesy https://www.fiercebiotech.com/)

**Related**

**COVID-19: Bio researchers race to repurpose everything from antiviral to anticancer discoveries**

Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., and his lab mates at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) weren't thinking about coronaviruses when they initially developed their "viral trap," a DNA-based nanotechnology designed to capture and kill viruses floating in the bloodstream. But as the COVID-19 pandemic started to unfold, they realized they may be able to transform their invention into a potential solution to the relentless virus—and they got to work on a plan to do so.

**The rapidly growing understanding of COVID-19 has inspired several research groups to propose new methods for preventing and curing the disease. (ESB Professional/Shutterstock)**

Jonathan Dordick, Ph.D., and his lab mates at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) weren't thinking about coronaviruses when they initially developed their "viral trap," a DNA-based nanotechnology designed to capture and kill viruses floating in the bloodstream. But as the COVID-19 pandemic started to unfold, they realized they may be able to transform their invention into a potential solution to the relentless virus—and they got to work on a plan to do so.

"We have something that can be tailored specifically to the virus," said Dordick, professor of chemical and biological engineering at RPI, in an interview with FierceBiotechResearch. "There has been very rapid research that has come out in the last couple of months about the proteins on the surface of the coronavirus. Once we know their approximate location on the surface, and what the receptor is [on cells] that the virus targets, it allows us to very quickly tailor this DNA nanostructure" to COVID-19, he said. Dordick's team has developed a research proposal, which includes testing the viral trap technology in animal models of COVID-19, he added.

RPI is one of several institutions stepping up with ideas of how to take existing research and pivot it toward potential solutions to COVID-19. And these ideas are not just bubbling up in academia. Some biotech startups are taking existing antiviral discoveries—or even technologies they initially developed to address very different diseases, like cancer—and offering to deploy them toward defeating the coronavirus.

It may take several months or even years for these efforts to bear fruit, at which point this pandemic may have ended, but that's no deterrent, many scientists say. "We will see new viruses being passed from animals to humans again," predicted Christian Peters, M.D., Ph.D., CEO of Pinpoint Therapeutics, in an interview with FierceBiotechResearch. Pinpoint is one of the companies that's putting plans in place to target COVID-19. "We must have an armamentarium of different drugs with different mechanisms so we're ready for the future that's to come," Peters said. RPI's viral trap is adaptable to a range of viruses due to its design, Dordick explained.

The next step would be to use the same nanotechnology platform to kill the virus once it's snared in the trap. "In detecting the virus, we're also preventing it from binding to its receptor," he said. "We showed that the DNA binds to the proteins on the surface of the dengue virus, preventing them from infecting the target cell. In that way, we can inhibit the infection process." Dordick's team has shown that a similar approach is effective in preclinical models of influenza A and Zika virus, as well.


Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania discovered that inhibiting PPT1 slows tumor growth—a finding that led to the formation of Pinpoint, which is now optimizing PPT1 inhibitors to test in cancer. Pinpoint has received seed funding from Kairos Ventures, which in February kicked in $1 million in debt funding to help accelerate the search for candidate drugs. Although it will take several months to complete the laboratory and animal studies needed to identify drug candidates against COVID-19, Peters believes the insights they gain will remain relevant, even if the pandemic has resolved by that time. "It's important to look not just at the anti-viral components, but also at the anti-inflammatory properties that these drugs might have.

The rapidly unfolding COVID-19 pandemic has inspired the scientific community to come up with solutions that will have the potential to save lives in the future, RPI's Dordick said. "The key question after we get through this tragedy is, 'how will we avoid it again?'" Dordick said. "Will we have to shut everything down again, or can we have directed therapeutic development? I think we're learning the lesson that we need rapid vaccine development and rapid therapeutic development. We're going to learn an awful lot about what we can do." (Courtesy https://www.fiercebiotech.com/)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

# COMMUNITY

## What Covid Treatments Are Working And What More Is On The Horizon?


**New data from a large U.K. trial added to evidence indicating plasma may not make a difference in treating Covid-19. (Photo/Alex Edelman/AFP via Getty Images)**

### Key Point

***Some therapies that faced early questions are regaining their promise as we learn more. Others aren't, but it's important news either way.***

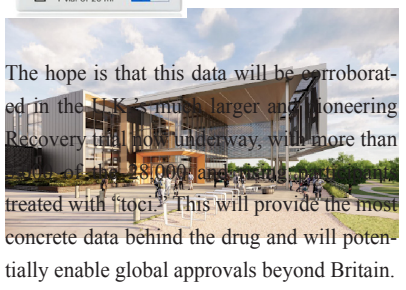
**Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor**

The arrival of Covid-19 vaccines has put the focus of the pandemic fight on inoculating as many people as quickly as possible. But outbreaks are still raging worldwide, with thousands of new infections every day and health systems under pressure to care for the sick, a reality that will continue for some time. Vaccine timelines also keep getting more and more stretched. With that in mind, it's a good time to take stock of where we are in treating the disease. The short answer is, there's progress but it's mixed.

For months, Gilead Sciences Inc.'s **remdesivir** and the generic steroid dexamethasone have been used on the front lines after being shown to reduce hospital stays and improve recovery speeds. Now, as we learn more about Covid-19, more treatments — including some that at first drew skepticism from physicians and scientists — are proving effective in certain circumstances. Others, such as convalescent plasma, are not. Let's take a look:

"**Toci**": Two arthritis drugs that previously failed in treating Covid-19 — Roche Holding AG's **tocilizumab** and Sanofi-Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc.'s **sarilumab** — are now showing a meaningful effect in helping reduce the burden of disease in some patients. It seems that when the drugs are used is key. The latest data comes from a trial involving patients who were treated within 24 hours of needing hospital care in an intensive care unit. The drugs reduced mortality, suggesting that seven or eight lives would be saved for each 100 people treated.





The hope is that this data will be corroborated in the U.K.'s much larger and pioneering Recovery trial now underway, with more than [illegible] of the 28,000 [illegible] treated with 'toci.' This will provide the most concrete data behind the drug and will potentially enable global approvals beyond Britain.

"**Bam-bam**": Next up are new drugs developed by Eli Lilly & Co. and Regeneron, part of a promising group of therapies called monoclonal antibodies that mimic the body's response to infection. Lilly's **bamlanivimab**, affectionately known as "bam-bam," was the first to gain emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration. Both Lilly's and Regeneron's treatment have now been cleared for high-risk patients to help prevent hospitalization. One obstacle for adoption of these drugs has been the logistics of administering them — they need to be delivered using specialized infusion equipment. This difficulty was compounded in bam-bam's case with a confusing efficacy story and lukewarm comments about it in the Covid-19 treatment guidelines from the National Institutes of Health, resulting in doses piling up on hospital shelves. This situation may be about to change, though, given an early read from a 2,000-patient Mayo Clinic study in which the use of bam-bam was shown to reduce hospitalizations and emergency-room visits by 70%.


There are also indications of a reduction in mortality. When data from this study is published, it is likely to drive increased interest in the use of bam-bam, and possibly Regeneron's antibody treatment, too. I do still remain cautious about the broad use of these drugs because of the risk they may hasten development of resistant mutations in the virus, which may, though unlikely, also impact vaccine-induced immunity.

**Plasma**: Convalescent plasma, a source of hope in the early days of the pandemic, has had a lot of subsequent failures and questions about its use. While not a drug per se, it is supposed to work in a similar way as monoclonal antibodies by giving patients ready-made immunity in a bottle in the form of plasma from recovered patients that is full of antibodies to the virus. The problem with previous attempts in showing a benefit from this approach was a lack of standardization and its use at the wrong time. Then recent data from a trial in Argentina raised hopes that if you use plasma with high amounts of antibodies early enough, when the infection itself is still active, it does make a difference. Unfortunately, there's since been another setback, and this time a very serious one. The U.K.'s aforementioned Recovery trial has been comparing Regeneron's antibody treatment and convalescent plasma to standard care without those treatments in a very large patient group, making the data and its statistical analysis very robust.

Findings released Friday from the trial showed no difference in the mortality of those receiving plasma and those on placebo. We still need to see the data in published form to be able to judge if there were any other potential explanations for the outcome. But if the result is unequivocal, it at least means there will be no more time and money wasted treating patients with an ineffective therapy that carries some risks. In a way, the negative outcome is still a step forward in sharpening treatments of Covid-19.

**Once A Relic Of Medical History, Radiation Emerges As An Intriguing — And Controversial — Treatment For Covid-19**

The idea of low-dose radiation as therapy had long been dismissed in favor of more modern treatments. That all changed when Covid-19 snowballed into a crisis, fueling fresh interest in anything that might ease the devastating cases of pneumonia in some patients. At least 52,000 of the more than 135,000 deaths due to Covid-19 in the U.S. have involved pneumonia, according to federal health data.

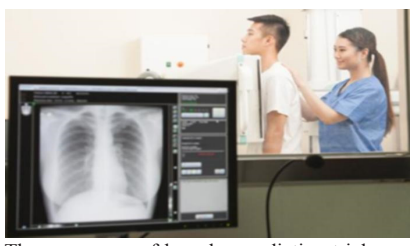
There are currently at least a dozen trials worldwide testing low-dose radiation therapy, or LDRT, as a treatment for pneumonia related to Covid-19, some spurred by the same historical data Calabrese and colleagues scoured years ago. The theory: Targeted radiation to the lungs will halt the out-of-control inflammation responsible for the devastating pneumonia that bookends the course of some Covid-19 patients.

**General Photographic Agency/Getty Images**

But the revived interest in radiotherapy has sparked a debate among physicians and researchers, who are divided on whether the idea is even ready for test-driving in clinical trials. With little known about the way LDRT works on inflamed lungs, some experts say it might exacerbate respiratory damage, while introducing the additional risk of cancer. Others say patients participating in the trials may suffer by missing out on more promising treatments.

On the other side, though, are experts who say there's a clear and urgent need for Covid-19 treatments that work, particularly for cases that become severe. Antibiotics can help treat cases of pneumonia from bacterial infections, but not those caused by viruses. Those experts argue compelling historical data gives LDRT a promising head start.

"It seems to be such an almost emotional topic," said Dörthe Schaue, a radiation oncologist at UCLA, on the debate raging over LDRT. "You get two extremes on the spectrum and the truth is probably somewhere in the middle, where you have to consider all the pluses and minuses."



The new wave of low-dose radiation trials are registered at academic centers and hospitals around the world, including in Italy, Spain, Iran, India, and the U.S. The studies are recruiting anywhere from five to 106 Covid-19 patients with pneumonia, and half require participants to be at least 40 years of age.

Arnab Chakravarti, chair of Ohio State's radiation and oncology department, is spearheading two of the four LDRT trials in the U.S. The first trial, PREVENT, will enroll around 100 oxygen-dependent Covid-19 patients at up to 20 hospitals around the country. The second trial, VENTED, is limited to Ohio State, where it will recruit 24 critically-ill patients who require ventilator support. Unlike PREVENT, VENTED is open to participants as young as 18.

The end of the pandemic may be in sight, assuming we can control infections and the development of new variants, but it's still many months away. Fortunately, the more we learn, the better we know which treatments are helpful and how to use them. The arsenal is growing. We can use all the help we can get. (Courtesy Bloomberg.com and https://www.statnews.com/)