Review of: "A Harmless Avian Vaccine Virus Could Be Developed into an Off-the-Shelf “Antibiotic” for Viruses"

Fanzhi Kong[1]

1 College of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Daqing, China

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The commentary article by Bakacs et al. proposed repurposing an avian vaccine virus, the infectious bursal disease virus (IBDV), strain R903/78, as a broad-spectrum antiviral drug and concluded by emphasizing the importance of prioritizing resources to address the high risk of influenza pandemics and the potential of IBDV R903/78 as an off-the-shelf solution. The authors advocate for superinfection therapy (SIT), using IBDV to control infections before the body's adaptive immunity kicks in. There is no doubt that this is an intriguing idea worth investigating further. The concept of "fighting fire with fire" has been applied not just in antiviral therapy but also in cancer therapy.

However, safety issues remain the highest priority in human drug development. More extensive and well-controlled clinical trials are required to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of IBDV R903/78 in a wider and more diverse population. The reference to a proposed Phase I/II experiment is insufficient to resolve this issue. Furthermore, utilizing a live virus, even an attenuated one, in human therapy involves ethical concerns that must be carefully considered and managed, especially in vulnerable groups. Even though this is a reverse-engineered IBDV strain, how can you prevent it from becoming more virulent or recombining with other viruses?