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What will be the economic impact of the H1N1 flu?

- It will be as big as the recession.
- Major.
- Minor.
- Negligible.

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Database for Combating Diseases Now Accessible to Researchers Online

BIOTECH: Project Began as Defense Against Bioterrorism

By HEATHER CHAMBERS

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

A seven-year project that began as a tool for combating bioterrorism has resulted in a database that vaccine developers say could help speed the development of new, more effective products.

Awarded to the La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology in 2003 under a \$25 million contract from the National Institutes of Health, the project has produced what the institute claims is the "world's largest collection of scientific data on how the immune system responds to infectious diseases."

It debuted May 5 and is available online free of charge to researchers worldwide at: iedb.org.

The Immune Epitope Database and Analysis Resource will allow researchers worldwide to access key information about the way the body responds to disease-causing agents.

"We not only give it away to academic institutions but we fully expect for-profit commercial entities to use it as tools to develop drugs and vaccines," said La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology project director Stephen Wilson.

The site provides data on more than 50,000 epitopes, or sites on the immune system a virus targets for attack.

Researchers study data on epitopes to determine how best to create an effective vaccine that will trigger the body's immune defenses.



Useful To Vaccine Makers

Creators culled information from thousands of peer-reviewed scientific research articles published over several decades. The data is largely useful to vaccine makers interested in treating everything from malaria to influenza A. Estimates show the global flu vaccine market alone worth roughly \$3 billion.

David Whitacre, chief scientific officer of VLP Biotech, an early stage company spun off of the

Vaccine Research Institute of San Diego, said he's used the database in the past to help guide his research.

"We actually identified several human T-cell epitopes we will soon incorporate into one of our influenza vaccines to see how that might improve the response to our influenza vaccine," he said.

VLP gets its name from its technique — viruslike particle — an approach to producing bodily defenses against infection by mimicking a virus in the body but without the genetic material.

The human immune system responds to a VLP vaccine as if it were seeing the live virus, which allows the body to build immune defenses capable of fighting infection.

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WEEKLY EDITION

May 18 - 24, 2009



Industrialist Looks to Expand Into Diverse Enterprises

Technical challenges abound at Weldmac Manufacturing.

Politicking Under Way to Fill Board Seats at Airport, Port

Two jobs on two governing boards have opened up, and while neither pays much, both are coveted because they involve the Unified Port of San Diego and the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, two of the most important public agencies in the region.

Database for Combating Diseases Now Accessible to Researchers Online

A seven-year project that began as a tool for combating bioterrorism has resulted in a database that vaccine developers say could help speed the development of new, more effective products.

Mega-Marriage

The San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. and startup incubator Connect have apparently agreed to merge, a pact that could presage a more important marriage with the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

WEEKLY EDITION

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