<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/06/amazon-is-secretly-working-on-a-cure-for-the-common-cold.html>

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/3/6/21168206/amazon-cold-virus-development-grand-challenge>

Amazon is trying to develop a vaccine against the common cold, CNBC [**reports**](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/06/amazon-is-secretly-working-on-a-cure-for-the-common-cold.html). The secretive project is part of an Amazon unit that, like Alphabet’s X, is trying to find solutions to big problems outside of the company’s traditional wheelhouse.

The sheer number of viruses that cause the common cold, coupled with the rate at which they mutate, has deterred many research groups from trying to find treatments or vaccines for the condition. To add to the challenge, the relatively benign, short-lived symptoms associated with the common cold mean a product will likely need a squeaky clean safety and tolerability profile to gain acceptance.

Yet, with one [**analysis**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12227674) putting the annual cost of the common cold to the U.S. economy in lost productivity at $25 billion, there is potentially a significant opportunity for a company with a product that strikes the careful balance needed to succeed in the space. Amazon wants to be that company.

The Seattle-based e-commerce giant has reportedly tasked a small team at its 100-person Grand Challenge unit, the R&D division code-named 1492, with working on ways to tackle the common cold. Amazon is aiming to develop a vaccine against the common cold, but it is also exploring other ways of curbing the impact the condition has on society.

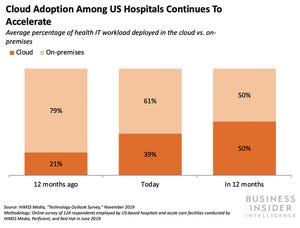
Exactly how Amazon is approaching the challenge, and how much money it is committing, remains unknown, with the company yet to publicly acknowledge the existence of Grand Challenge, let alone the common cold research group.

In recent years, researchers at groups other than Amazon have published papers about possible ways to treat and prevent the common cold. For example, in 2016 the authors of a [**paper**](https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms12838) in Nature Communications linked the administration of a polyvalent inactivated rhinovirus vaccine to the inducement of virus-neutralizing antibodies in monkeys. However, none of the projects has matured to the point that a vaccine against or treatment for the common cold is on the horizon.

<https://www.fiercebiotech.com/biotech/amazon-developing-a-vaccine-against-common-cold-report>

important

The big tech firm has been working on a cure for the common cold as part of a secret, years-long initiative referred to as "Project Gesundheit," [according to](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY25iYy5jb20vMjAyMC8wMy8wNi9hbWF6b24taXMtc2VjcmV0bHktd29ya2luZy1vbi1hLWN1cmUtZm9yLXRoZS1jb21tb24tY29sZC5odG1sP19fc291cmNlPXNoYXJlYmFy/5d233c18f730436f2414784fB3b3ea5ea) CNBC. Amazon's Grand Challenge — a research and development (R&D) group under the big tech firm's cloud division, Amazon Web Services — aims to develop a vaccine, and is researching various approaches to the problem.

[[](https://i.insider.com/5e67a792e4f9fe2502366928)](https://i.insider.com/5e67a792e4f9fe2502366928)

Business Insider Intelligence

Amazon's efforts to develop a cure could be a huge step forward in combating the common cold — and could generate massive savings for the US. Developing a cure for the common cold has been a significant challenge for researchers: In about 75% of cases, the common cold is caused by a class of virus known as rhinovirus, per CNBC, and there are 160 different strains of rhinovirus that scientists have identified.

Complicating matters even further, colds are also prone to mutations and can quickly develop resistance to drugs and vaccines. But developing a cure for the common cold would have huge implications on patients' health and insurers' bottom lines: The common cold affects [millions](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY2RjLmdvdi9mZWF0dXJlcy9yaGlub3ZpcnVzZXMvaW5kZXguaHRtbA/5d233c18f730436f2414784fB41c88346) of US citizens annually, and the rollout of a cure could generate massive savings for health insurers looking to cut down on their share of the [$40 billion](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubWRsaW54LmNvbS9pbnRlcm5hbC1tZWRpY2luZS9hcnRpY2xlLzI4MzE/5d233c18f730436f2414784fBfc828f75) the common cold costs the US each year.

The tech giant's common cold project highlights yet another layer of its large, multifaceted healthcare play — and we think Amazon is in a good position to build out its drug R&D efforts. This news builds on a broad series of healthcare-focused moves from the retail behemoth: Most recently, Amazon [rolled out](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly9pbnRlbGxpZ2VuY2UuYnVzaW5lc3NpbnNpZGVyLmNvbS9wb3N0L2FtYXpvbi1yb2xscy1vdXQtYW1hem9uLWNhcmUtdG8tc2VhdHRsZS1iYXNlZC1lbXBsb3llZXMtd29tZW5zLWhlYWx0aC1zdGFydHVwLW1hdmVuLW5hYnMtNDVtLW1lZHRyb25pYy1hY3F1aXJlcy1kaWdpdGFsLXN1cmdlcnktaW4tc3VyZ2ljYWwtcm9ib3RpY3MtcHVzaC0yMDIwLTI_Y2lkPXNlYXJjaA/5d233c18f730436f2414784fB2995d4a5) its Amazon Care telehealth service to Seattle-based employees and [updated](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly9pbnRlbGxpZ2VuY2UuYnVzaW5lc3NpbnNpZGVyLmNvbS9wb3N0L25ldy1hbGV4YS1mZWF0dXJlLWVuYWJsZXMtdXNlcnMtdG8tYXNrLWFib3V0LW1lZHMtYmVuZWZpdHMtc3RhcnR1cC1hY2NvbGFkZS1maWxlcy1mb3ItaXBvLXdhbGdyZWVucy1hcHAtbGVha3Mtc2VjdXJlLW1lc3NhZ2VzLTIwMjAtMz9jaWQ9c2VhcmNo/5d233c18f730436f2414784fBdb50ce5c) its voice-enabled virtual assistant Alexa to answer questions about 1,500 of the most widely prescribed drugs and their interactions.

And the brand's increasing involvement in R&D via "Project Gesundheit" underscores exactly how wide of a net Amazon is casting in terms of its larger healthcare play — spanning from pharmacy to care delivery to health insurance. And we expect Amazon to continue leaning into its drug R&D efforts further, as it'll open up even more opportunities for tie-ups between the tech titan and pharmaceutical companies — which would benefit both parties.

Amazon could benefit financially from the terms of a tie-up, while pharmaceutical firms could benefit by leveraging Amazon's R&D tech to speed up drug discovery and cut down on the [$2.6 billion](https://e.businessinsider.com/click/19668168.4/aHR0cHM6Ly9pbnRlbGxpZ2VuY2UuYnVzaW5lc3NpbnNpZGVyLmNvbS9wb3N0L3BoYXJtYS1zdGFydHVwLW5hYnMtMjUwbS1mcm9tLXNvZnRiYW5rLWFpLWdlbmVyYXRlZC1kcnVnLXRvLWVudGVyLWNsaW5pY2FsLXRyaWFscy1ob3ctcHJlZGljdGl2ZS1hbmFseXRpY3MtY291bGQtaGVscC1ob3NwaXRhbHMtYXZvaWQtY21zLXBlbmFsdGllcy0yMDIwLTE_Y2lkPXNlYXJjaA/5d233c18f730436f2414784fBfdc77b14) it takes to put a prescription drug through testing and trials.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-secretly-working-on-cold-cure-2020-3?IR=T>

Amazon has been quietly working on a project to cure the common cold.

The "years-long" scheme, dubbed "Project Gesundheit," is the work of the e-commerce giant's Grand Challenge group, [according to CNBC](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/06/amazon-is-secretly-working-on-a-cure-for-the-common-cold.html).

In the majority of cases, the common cold is caused by a class of viruses called rhinoviruses. The [search for a cure](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-havent-we-cured-the-common-cold-yet/) for the common cold began in the 1950s but as there are so many strains in existence -- at least 160, if not more -- finding a "cure-all" method that tackles each variety of pathogen and can be concentrated into a vaccine or single method of treatment has not proved to be an easy prospect for scientists.

**See also:**[Coronavirus and flu: Is that product safe? Experts explain the real risks](https://www.zdnet.com/article/coronavirus-and-flu-where-was-a-given-product-made-and-is-it-safe/" \t "_blank)

However, Amazon's team has willingly taken up the challenge.

Several sources familiar with the matter told the publication that scientists and researchers make up Project Gesundheit members and they hope to find a way to grant us immunity against the common cold, an illness that costs the US economy an estimated [$40 billion](https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/news/20030224/cost-of-common-cold-40-billion) per year.

A vaccine is being considered, as are alternative measures to combat the common illness.

The problem is that strains of rhinovirus evolve and mutate over time, and so a 'cure' would have to be able to tackle emerging varieties as well as those that currently exist.

In addition, if treatment is rooted in biomedicine, as venture capitalist Mike Pellini told CNBC, then drugs would need to have almost no side effects to be worth taking in comparison to a general recovery period of a week or two.

It s also debatable whether a cure would be paid for by medical insurers in countries including the United States.

Grand Challenge is a research and development group that has not been publicly acknowledged by Amazon but is focused on tackling humanitarian issues including, but not limited to, healthcare.

However, Amazon's team is not the only group on the quest to cure the common cold. Last year, researchers from Stanford, the University of California-San Francisco (UCSF), the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub and the VA Palo Alto Health Care System revealed a project to disrupt viruses from taking hold -- [including rhinoviruses](https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2019/09/in-human-cells-and-mice-a-cure-for-the-common-cold.html).

By tampering with a non-critical protein in cells, it may be possible to stop a range of viruses from replicating, such as those responsible for the common cold.

"Our grandmas have always been asking us, 'If you're so smart, why haven't you come up with a cure for the common cold?," Jan Carette, senior author of a paper documenting the research, said. "Now we have a new way to do that."

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/meet-project-gesundheit-amazons-secret-project-to-cure-the-common-cold/>

The Grand Challenge team is tasked with solving really big problems and is run by Babak Parviz, who previously worked at Alphabet’s R&D group formerly known as Google X. The team hasn’t been publicly acknowledged by Amazon, but CNBC first reported on it in 2017.

The common cold is estimated to cost the U.S. economy billions per year, but is especially difficult to eliminate because there are 160 known strains of the cold, and the virus (rhinovirus) is especially prone to mutation.

<https://www.thestreet.com/investing/amazon-wants-to-cure-the-common-cold>

<https://medium.com/better-programming/how-to-deploy-your-react-app-to-heroku-aedc28b218ae>

<https://blog.heroku.com/deploying-react-with-zero-configuration>

heroku git:remote -a firstreactdeploy