

Vaccines: Interest and Investment

Mark Hamrick:

Consumers clamoring for swine flu vaccine have given pharmaceutical powerhouses one more reason to jump into the once anemic vaccine business. Until recently, drugmakers had devoted much of their resources toward lucrative daily pills for chronic diseases. By the middle of this decade, only a handful were still making vaccines.

Stephen G. Brozak:

Swine flu was, you know, literally, uh, the wakeup call saying: Hey listen! Uh, you've got a global pandemic, category six. Now, category six doesn't mean that it's, you know, Stephen King time, but what it does mean is that this virus is, uh, all over the world, and that-the, you're looking at exposure in the United States which will pretty much probably hit the majority of the U.S. population by the time all-all's said and done. Of those certainly that aren't vaccinated.

Mark Hamrick:

That means millions of doses of vaccines, from swine flu to seasonal flu, have been manufactured, and that translates into huge sales for companies like GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, and others. But interest and investment started building years before the current pandemic.

Stephen G. Brozak:

I think the government realized that there was a colossal problem in the making, but they really decided to step up when H5N1 started to present itself. And that was really when they actually started writing checks.

Mark Hamrick:

Much of the recent investments have targeted faster ways to manufacture the vaccines, with companies looking to move beyond growing viruses in chicken eggs.

Stephen G. Brozak:

Within the vaccine industry, it's roughly fifty-year-old manufacturing, and we don't accept that in cars. And the government made a decision: why should we accept it in the most important part of health care?

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