



MRNA – HYPE OR HOPE

by Larissa Klinker



SYNOPSIS

Over 150 different mRNA-based therapies and vaccines are currently being developed around the world. Is mRNA technology the new game-changer in medicine – or is it just hype?

For many years, mRNA technology seemed unsuitable as a therapeutic approach. But today, it is expected that in the future mRNA will be used to treat a wide range of diseases – including cancer, HIV, malaria, cardiovascular and autoimmune diseases. But how does it work exactly? mRNA vaccines transport the blueprint of a viral protein into cells which then begin to produce the foreign biomolecule. The immune system ramps up its defences against the virus, even though it only knows a small, harmless part of the pathogen. What sounds simple on paper is almost as complex as a landing on Mars in a living organism. Scientists started investigating mRNA a good three decades ago with the aim of developing individual therapies to treat cancer. Today, clinical studies are looking at how heart muscle regenerates...

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