



# A look at the KDCA's blueprint for Korea's healthcare system

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## 3 key targets for Korea's healthcare system moving forward

As Korea's central disease control agency, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) and its policy initiatives grant insight into how the incumbent administration plans to develop the country's healthcare system moving forward.

Based on a recent KDCA report, as well as its FY2025 budget plan released on 30 August, we introduce the three key targets and major pending projects that KDCA is set to focus on in 2H 2024. Given that these targets are also included in next year's budget plan, they are expected to constitute a major element of KDCA policy for the interim.

### 'Capacity for a million daily infections'

As Korea's urbanization persists and pandemic memories remain fresh, the risk of infectious diseases spreading rapidly has taken center stage with the Korean government.

To address this, the KDCA has indicated that it will **prioritize policy and investment strategies for more robust disease surveillance mechanisms, rapid response teams, and effective public health communication channels accordingly.**



### **'Novel disease vaccine/treatment development within 100-200 days'**

In the pursuit of becoming a global leader in health security, the KDCA has set out to establish a foundation that enables the rapid development of vaccines and therapeutics within 100-200 days of a pandemic outbreak. This involves fostering a strong R&D environment – exemplified by its 'K-Bio Vaccine Fund' initiative set up earlier this year – which notably entails streamlining regulatory and approval processes, as well as pursuing collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector. For the latter, the KDCA has been working to launch this by for example signing a data sharing agreement with the European Medicines Agency in Q2, among other similar agreements.

### **'Ensuring quality of life in the era of 100-year lifespans'**

Amid Korea's ever-compounding population crisis, the KDCA is also prioritizing healthcare services for the inevitably large and growing population of elderly Koreans. In particular, the agency has worked to bolster support for personalized services and medicines, and public health initiatives tailored to different age groups. As Korea's nationalized healthcare system is revamped by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (among others), it is expected that focus on capacity for chronic diseases and quality of life will increasingly be targeted for state support.

To support its 3 key targets, the KDCA has identified a handful of supporting initiatives that it hopes will help work toward achieving them. Among these, vaccine development and disease prevention feature prominently.

#### **mRNA capacity**

Noting predictions of a future pandemic - especially from the influenza and coronavirus disease families – the KDCA has set its sights on developing a homegrown mRNA vaccine development platform, through which dynamic pandemic response would be made possible.

**Targeted support for vaccines, treatments, & prevention**



In particular, the KDCA has heavily cited neighboring Japan's example of focused and rapid investment, over \$7 billion, to develop its own onshore mRNA platform in the wake of COVID-19. The KDCA looks to follow a similar model, leveraging joint public-private investment to bring together elements of the necessary supply chain (hitherto disperse/subject to foreign supply lines that come under pressure during high-demand pandemic eras), such that commercialization of "in-house" homegrown mRNA vaccines is possible – and within, the government hopes, 200 days when all is said and done.



### Infectious disease priorities

Complementing the drive to develop an onshore mRNA platform, the KDCA simultaneously aims to step up infectious disease prevention for whooping cough (pertussis), tick-borne encephalitis (TBE), and malaria – the latter of which has re-emerged in Korea in recent years after being effectively eradicated.

Building on systems tested and implemented during COVID-19, the KDCA aims to implement AI and other technologies into contact tracing, mapping, and modelling preventative measures.

Influenza tracking, immunization, and treatment-driven recovery will also be a priority for the KDCA; the disease family has been tagged for its pandemic potential, exemplified by a recent outbreak of bird flu in Asia that also spread to Korea. A comprehensive review of response capacity at both central and local government levels will take place first, with appropriate budgets presumably allotted thereafter to ramp up capacities where deemed necessary.

Contact us to know more of Korea's latest healthcare policies

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