OHSU agrees to relax licensing agreements to speed COVID treatments

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Oregon Health & Science University has joined with other research universities to relax traditional licensing rules, with a goal of expediting promising treatments, vaccines and diagnostic tools for COVID-19.

OHSU joined a growing list of institutions who have signed onto the COVID-19 Technology Development Framework, led by Stanford University, Harvard University and MIT.

“Traditional licensing of technology and IP doesn’t just happen overnight,” said Andrew Watson, OHSU’s senior director of technology transfer. “Often, it’s a process that can take weeks, if not months, to accomplish. Through this framework, we’re hoping to accelerate that process and reduce barriers in the traditional university licensing arena for technology that could be helpful in making discovery a more accelerated process and to get these opportunities out there for the benefit of the public.”
Normally, university labs carefully protect IP to encourage investment in R&D for new products. But COVID-19 has been spreading rapidly around the world, and there is no vaccine or proven cure.

The universities would work with companies that wanted to develop discoveries into a products through a nonexclusive licensing agreement on a royalty-free basis, Watson said. The company, as the licensee, would be required to distribute the resulting product as widely as possible and at as low a cost as possible.

“The tradeoff is they don’t profit from it and we won’t either during this pandemic time period,” Watson said. “We’re trying to do what’s in the public’s best interest vs. make money off it, and what we’re hoping is that companies will do that as well.”

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