

Pandemics

David Baker, of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, noted that, although cancer drugs are also expensive to develop and bring to market, "there will always be people dying of cancer." But pandemics arrive infrequently and don't necessarily stay for long — characteristics that make them a commercial liability.

"It's one of those cases where a traditional market economy doesn't work so well," [Amesh] Adalja, [a physician at] Johns Hopkins, said. "Suppose you made a sars antiviral in 2003," after its 2002-03 run. "You would not have had a return on investment, because sars was gone."

Michael Hutson, The New Yorker, Apr. 13, 2020