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**US-ITALIAN PROJECT SHOWS SUBSTANCE CAN HELP BIO-TERROR FIGHT.**

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(ANSA) - Washington, March 25 - An Italo-American project against bioterrorism is proving that newfangled substances or laboratory advances are not the only path towards protecting citizens.

According to research carried out under a US-Italian health cooperation accord, the natural supplement **carnitine** has shown promise in warding off attacks with anthrax, sarin and botulin.

Already, results from a study of 400 patients have indicated that at high doses the substance can protect the nervous system from deadly viruses and nerve gases.

A larger experiment is set to start next year and will be carried out by the Italian pharmaceutical company Sigma-Tau, which has been making **carnitine** since the 1970s for use with kidney and heart patients.

The groundbreaking research has been the subject of a bioterrorism pow-wow at the National Institutes of Health this week outside Washinton, where Sigma Tau scientific director Menotti Calvani was the only representative of the commercial or industrial world invited.

Calvani explained that viruses, bacteria and nerve gases stop nerve cells assimilating the sugar they need to function.

**Carnitine** appears to be able to block this fatal process from happening, he said, allowing the cells to get their natural fuel, convert it into insulin, and continue working properly.

Claudio Cavazza, president of Sigma Tau, said the project was an example of how nations could divide up tasks to concentrate their expertise on specific aspects of bioterror threats.

"This type of research will become a cornerstone of national defence," he said.

"The idea could be to organise at a European level a working plan whereby each country, according to its competence and industrial capacity, shares out the fields of research and development to explore."

Cavazza provided two examples, saying that Italy could deal mainly with studying "the metabolism of certain promising substances," while France could focus on developing vaccines against bioterrorism agents.