

"Ph III results for BCG vaccine should come before 2020 ends"- Adar Poonawalla

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Serum Institute looks up for Ph III trials results of BCG vaccine against COVID-19



Pune based Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd (SIIL) has been supported under Department of Biotechnology's National Biopharma Mission for conduct of a multisite randomized double-blinded placebo-controlled phase III clinical trial of a recombinant BCG vaccine candidate, VPM1002.

The objective of this trial is to evaluate the ability of VPM1002 in reducing infection incidence and severe disease outcomes of COVID-19 among high-risk persons of advanced age or co-morbidities and high-exposure healthcare workers (HCWs).

BCG vaccine is administered routinely to all newborn babies as a part of the National childhood immunization programme to prevent tuberculosis (TB), an infection caused by bacteria that mainly affects the lungs. It has beneficial heterologous effects and proven antiviral and immune modulatory properties that protect against infectious diseases through induction of trained innate immunity and heterologous adaptive immunity.

About 6,000 health workers and high-risk individuals including those in close contact of COVID patients have been enrolled in a clinical trial to determine if the recombinant Bacillus Calmette-Guerian (rBCG) can boost immunity to fight against the virus.

Dr Renu Swarup, Secretary, DBT and Chairperson, BIRAC speaking on the subject said that "BCG vaccine is a proven platform and utilizing its off-target effects for diseases other than TB is a very pragmatic approach to take. The trial began in May' 2020 and has completed enrolment of 6000 subjects in almost 40 hospitals across the country. This is an important milestone, in the quest for preventing the disease and we look forward to the results of this important trial".

"We are delighted to partner with DBT-BIRAC for this study and look forward to the positive results of the trial, which should be available before the end of this year", said Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India (SII).