

## New COVID-19 vaccine promisingly effective in early trial

– January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 –

Johnson & Johnson’s coronavirus vaccine candidate appears to be reasonably safe and generates a good immune response after a single jab, according to early trial data published today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The three COVID-19 jabs currently approved for use in most Western economies require two consecutive shots. In light of limited supplies, several countries, including the UK, have decided to stretch the time between injections to provide as many people as possible with the first dose.

Healthcare experts worldwide have criticised this strategy because it means diverting from the dosing schedule that has proven effective in clinical trials.

In a statement from early January, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) noted: “Without appropriate data supporting such changes in vaccine administration, we run a significant risk of placing public health at risk, undermining the historic vaccination efforts to protect the population from COVID-19.” A single-shot vaccine would help alleviate this problem.

The now published data are preliminary results from an early-development trial. That study aims to determine the proper dose and gather information about the safety of the new jab. The study included 805 healthy adults who received either one or two injections with the vaccine or a placebo.

About a month after the vaccine injection, most participants (90%) developed neutralising antibodies against coronavirus. This proportion increased to 100% after about two months. A second injection increased the number of antibodies but – according to the authors – may not be necessary for complete protection from the virus.

The most common side effects were pain at the injection site, fever, fatigue, headache and muscle ache, similar to the side effects reported for the approved coronavirus vaccines.

In a communication by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change published last week, Executive Chairman Blair laid out a strategy to immunise most of the UK population by the end of March. He called Johnson & Johnson’s jab one of the “workhorse vaccines” to accomplish this.

At this point, the new vaccine is still in the test phase. The manufacturer currently evaluates its effectiveness in a phase 3 trial. Initial results of that study could be available by the end of this month.

### Sources:

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2. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2021. *A Blueprint for Accelerated Vaccine Rollout*. Available at: <https://institute.global/policy/blueprint-accelerated-vaccine-rollout> [Accessed 13 January 2021].
3. U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2021. *FDA Statement on Following the Authorized Dosing Schedules for COVID-19 Vaccines*. [online] Available at: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-statement-following-authorized-dosing-schedules-covid-19-vaccines> [Accessed 13 January 2021].