

BLACK AMERICA AND CORONAVIRUS

Fears of blood clots, other problems and the experimental vaccines

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Still feel safe and protected from catching Covid-19 after taking the experimental vaccine? Consider the 144 people in Michigan who tested positive after being fully vaccinated.

Pfizer and Moderna have admitted their vaccines do not protect people from getting the virus or spreading it, but say they prevent severe illness or hospitalization.

The science is not being openly and clearly articulated, said Dr. Reuben Warren, director of the Tuskegee University National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care.

“As I understand the vaccine does not prevent infection, it reduces the severity of the infection. That’s a very important point because it doesn’t say we shouldn’t continue the preventive strategies of wearing the masks, washing your hands, and appropriate physical distancing, and not gathering in large numbers,” Dr. Warren told The Final Call.

“People are getting vaccinations confused with the preventive services. Those things are separate, and they should continue on regularly,” he added.

The 144 in Michigan are people who tested positive 14 or more days after they took their last dose of the vaccine, according to a statement attributed to Bob Wheaton, public information officer for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, by NBC News 25.

Some may ultimately be excluded from that list due to continuing to test positive from a recent infection prior to being fully vaccinated, said Mr. Wheaton, according to NBC News.

Dr. Warren’s caution comes amid reports that some states with recently loosened restrictions are seeing an uptick in infections.

Cases in Connecticut have been increasing gradually, said Gov. Ned Lamont on March 29, according to Patch News’ Rich Scinto. Coronavirus hospitalizations rose by 42 patients over the previous weekend up to 498, the highest total since Feb. 22, he wrote.

“People need to remember you can still get very severe

[COVID-19] even in your 20s and 30s and 40s,” said Josh Geballe, chief operating officer, Connecticut Department of Public Health, according to the news report. “You’re not invincible,” stated Mr. Geballe.

Connecticut ranked fourth in the country for the highest infection rate, according to The New York Times March 31 coronavirus tracker.

Michigan led the country in recent cases per capita and the number of hospitalized coronavirus patients more than doubled in two weeks. New York, third, and New Jersey, second, have continued to report increases in Covid-19 cases.

Questions about vaccine safety?

Claims of vaccine safety and efficacy may mean little for those who have died or were seriously or severely injured after taking the shots, or their loved ones.

Gregory Michael, M.D., a 56-year-old Miami Beach, Fla., obstetrician and gynecologist, died from an unusual blood disorder (acute immune thrombocytopenia) on Dec. 18, sixteen days after getting his first dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine.

James Bussel, M.D., professor emeritus of pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City, and colleagues reviewed 20 reports of the disorder after taking the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines in the U.S., and found 17 of the patients did not have pre-existing thrombocytopenia (or low blood platelet counts), according to MedPage Today. The medical news service provides news and free continuing education to healthcare professionals. Patients’ median age was 41 and 11 were women, it reported.

Richard Terrell of Virginia developed a severe rash and was admitted to the hospital for five days after getting the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and his doctors believe it was a direct result of the shot, according to a report by Talya Cunningham and released on Nextar NewsWire.

“I think we need to understand that we’re still in phases of clinical trials. I understand there are four phases, sometimes three, and sometimes four, and we’re still finding out,” said Dr. Warren.

He said the value of clinical trials is that it takes time to see the impact of any medical device, any drug, or medication, so the discovery phase is still in effect.

“Let’s be real clear: we’re still in the emergency use authorization from the FDA (Food and Drug Administration), which is different than full authorization. And we haven’t had time, or the appropriate kind of analysis to talk about long term impact, or full approval. We’re still learning. The science is still evolving, so we need to be clear to the community about that,” continued Dr. Warren.

Meanwhile, some European countries recently suspended use of AstraZeneca’s vaccine due to blood clotting which has led to deaths and severe injuries.

At least 30 people in the United Kingdom experienced rare types of blood clots after receiving the Oxford-AstraZeneca



SIDE EFFECTS

vaccine, according to the country’s medicines regulator, CNN reported. The regulator said it was too early to know whether the shot itself triggered the clots, said the April 2 CNN report.

According to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, there were 22 reports of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis, where clotting forms in the sinuses that drain blood from the brain, and eight other reports of thrombosis, out of a total of 15.8 million people who had been given at least one dose of the vaccine by March 21, according to a CNN article by Angela Dewan and Richard Allen Greene.

A breakdown of data showed four people had died, but the agency did not immediately respond to CNN’s questions to confirm whether there had been fatalities.

“But more and more reports of blood clots from different countries are dripping in, particularly in Europe, where the AstraZeneca vaccine is widely used. Some countries are choosing to suspend the vaccine altogether, while others have limited its use to certain age groups,” the article said.

The UK did not halt distribution of the vaccine.

According to CNN’s report, Germany said it would limit the vaccine to people over the age of 60 after 31 reports of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis, which causes clotting in the sinuses.

Reuters reported from German’s medicines regulator that 29 of the 31 of those impacted were women age 20 to 63, and nine of the patients died, according to CNN. As of March 30, Norway reported three deaths in people who experienced a combination of blood clotting, low platelet count and hemorrhaging three to 14 days after receiving the vaccine.

Doctors and researchers aren’t sure of the scientific reason behind the blood clots and the AstraZeneca vaccine, so it’s unclear if some countries will halt it completely, commented Jabril Muhammad, who holds a Ph.D. in human genetics.

“Long story short, the blood clotting hasn’t died down. It’s only increased,” Dr. Muhammad told The Final Call.



Covid-19 origins report inconclusive: We must 'leave no stone unturned'—WHO chief

The report from a team of international scientists assembled by the World Health Organization (WHO) to examine how Covid-19 first spread to humans was recently published, and was described by the UN health agency's chief as a welcome start, but far from conclusive.

"This report is a very important beginning, but it is not the end," said WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We have not yet found the source of the virus, and we must continue to follow the science and leave no stone unturned as we do."

He welcomed March 30 the findings of the 34-member team, which in January, visited the Chinese city of Wuhan where the first cases of the then new coronavirus came to light at the end of 2019.

But the WHO chief was clear that overall, it raises "further questions that will need to be addressed by further studies, as the team itself notes in the report."



He noted that although much data had been provided, to fully understand the earliest cases, they would need access from Chinese authorities "to data including biological samples from at least September" 2019.

"In my discussions with the team, they expressed the difficulties they encountered in accessing raw data. I expect future collaborative studies to include more timely and comprehensive data sharing."

Animal markets' role, 'still unclear'

Tedros welcomed the recommendations for further studies to understand the earliest human cases and clusters, and to trace animals sold at markets in and around Wuhan, but "the role of animal markets is still unclear."

The team confirmed there had been widespread contamination in the large market of Huanan but could not determine the source of this contamination.

"Again, I welcome the recommendations for further research, including a full analysis of the trade in animals and products in markets across Wuhan, particularly those linked to early human cases," he said.

He agreed that farmers, suppliers and their contacts should be interviewed, and that more study was needed to identify

what role "farmed wild animals may have played in introducing the virus to markets in Wuhan and beyond."

Lab leak theory not ruled out

The team also visited several laboratories in Wuhan and considered the possibility that the virus had entered the human population as a result of a laboratory incident, noted Tedros.

"However, I do not believe that this assessment was extensive enough. Further data and studies will be needed to reach more robust conclusions," he said.

"Although the team has concluded that a laboratory leak is the least likely hypothesis, this requires further investigation, potentially with additional missions involving specialist experts, which I am ready to deploy."

As far as WHO is concerned "all hypotheses remain on the table," he told the Member State briefing on the report in Geneva.

"Finding the origin of a virus takes time and we owe it to the world to find the source so we can collectively take steps to reduce the risk of this happening again. No single research trip can provide all the answers." (*UN News*)

Cuba has the highest rate of recovered Covid-19 patients in the Americas

(GRANMA)—With the highest rate of patients recovered from Covid-19 in the Americas—94.2% as of March 20, according to the Ministry of Public Health—and two of its five candidate vaccines in the final stage of clinical trials, Cuba is consolidating its national strategy to confront the pandemic, with results that were recognized by the President of Bolivia, Luis Arce.

"We salute the sister people of Cuba, which despite the brutal blockade, is the only Latin American country that has two candidate vaccines in Phase III: Soberana 02 and Abdala," Arce said, describing as admirable what the country has achieved in control of the disease.

The gesture was reciprocated by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, who expressed special thanks for Bolivia's support in the fight against the U.S. blockade, while reaffirming the brotherhood that unites the two nations.

Precisely as another piece of news on Cuba's progress against the SARS-COV-2 virus demonstrates, several institutions in Havana began intervention trials of Soberana 02 with 150,000 volunteers, on March 22, following approval from the State Center for the Control of Medicines and Medical Devices.

The information was published on the BioCubaFarma enterprise group's Twitter account, along with other details and explaining that results collected will complement clinical efficacy data gathered in the phase III trials of Soberana 02, and allow for evaluation of the vaccine's impact on reducing the incidence and dispersion of the virus within the population.

The trial will include an at-risk group of health workers in the biopharmaceutical industry in Havana and other sectors defined by Minsap.

A mother's love for the homeland: Our five vaccines

"Abdala joins the vanguard, bringing us closer to Cuba's immunization. I think once again of Fidel who created and foresaw this moment. And I think of Martí who said in verse: 'mother's love for the Homeland.'



A health worker collects a sample for a COVID-19 test from a baby who arrived on a flight from Mexico at the Jose Martí International Airport in Havana, Cuba, in November 2020. Photo: AP Ramon Espinosa

"These are our five vaccines," President of the Republic Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, said as phase III of the clinical trial of this candidate vaccine were about to begin.

On his official Twitter account, he noted that, after rigorous analysis, the Center for State Control of Medicines, Equipment and Medical Devices (Cecmed) had approved this definitive test, which will be conducted in the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Granma and Guantánamo, where "48,000 volunteers will be putting their shoulder to the wheel for Cuba," he said.

The news was confirmed in a press conference by specialists. Dr. Eulogio Pimentel Vázquez, vice-president of the BioCubaFarma enterprise group, emphasized the importance of Cuba having two candidate vaccines among the 20 in phase III clinical trials around the world.

According to Dr. Marta Ayala Avila, member of the Party Political Bureau and general director of the Genetic Engineering and

Biotechnology Center (CIGB), efficacy results are being sought during this third phase, which began on March 22, while the safety and immunogenicity of the drug continue to be evaluated.

She specified that, in the eastern municipalities where this stage of the study is underway, some 20 clinical sites and 46 vaccination stations have been prepared, while volunteers between 19 and 80 years of age are to be included. The goal is to immunize the total pool of volunteers during the last week of March and the month of April.

Regarding the production of this vaccine developed by the CIGB, the general manager of AICA Laboratories, Antonio Vallín García, stated that the company has three production lines, and a fourth is in the process of construction, making for a manufacturing capacity of close to 46 million vials, which means many more guaranteed doses.

Cuba and China developing a pan-corona vaccine, to control new strains of the virus

China and Cuba are working on a vaccine, called Pan-Corona, which will be effective against different strains of the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus and prevent COVID-19, as confirmed at a March 22 press conference.

The Xinhua news agency specified that Chinese scientists and Cubans from the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center are developing the product in a facility opened in the central city of Yongzhou, Hunan province, specifically for research projects involving the two countries.

Gerardo Guillen, director of biomedical research at the CIGB, told the media that the study was requested by the Chinese, and, PL added, the research is based on combining parts of the virus that have been preserved, and therefore less prone to variation, to generate antibodies, directed toward a cellular response.

"This is a strategy that could protect against epidemiological emergencies caused by new strains of the coronavirus that could exist in the future," he said.