

OXFORD VACCINE PRODUCING ANTIBODIES AND T-CELLS

The Daily Telegraph newspaper reports that the Phase 1 trials of the coronavirus vaccine being developed by scientists in Oxford generates a cellular immune response as well as antibodies.

Blood taken from volunteers who have had the vaccine contained “killer T-cells”.

This is promising news as several studies have shown that antibodies against coronavirus can fade away in months. However cellular immunity may be more long-lasting.

However, a source close to the team commented that “this does not yet prove that the Oxford vaccine will provide long-lasting immunity against COVID-19. So far so good. But we still have a long way to go.”

The full findings will be published in *The Lancet* medical journal on Monday.

David Carpenter, Chairman of the Berkshire Research Ethics Committee, which approved the Oxford trial, told the Telegraph that the team were “absolutely on track. Nobody can put final dates... things might go wrong but the reality is that by working with a big pharma company, that vaccine could be fairly widely available around September and that is the sort of target they are working on.”

The drug company AstraZeneca has signed a deal to produce 2 billion doses of the Oxford vaccine. It has also reached an agreement with Europe’s Inclusive Vaccines Alliance (IVA) to supply up to 400 million doses of the University of Oxford’s COVID-19 vaccine – at no profit – with deliveries starting by the end of 2020.

UK Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, said teams were working towards a “best-case scenario” of a vaccine being made available some time this year, although he conceded it was more likely in 2021.

He continued, “We are all giving AstraZeneca and the team at Oxford, and the Imperial vaccine, every possible support. We are working with the other potential vaccines around the world, in America, and Germany, and the Netherlands.

“The most clinically vulnerable, such as the elderly, and healthcare workers would be the first to get the vaccine”.

AUTHOR:

Dr Quarry MBBS, MSc (Community Health)

Group Medical Director, Health Intelligence, International SOS