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Inovio to begin Ph 1/2 clinical trial of COVID-19 vaccine

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CEPI grants $6.9 million funding to INOVIO and IVI to conduct clinical testing in Korea for INOVIO's COVID-19 vaccine candidate



South Korea based International Vaccine Institute (IVI) has announced that the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) has granted $6.9 million funding to US based INOVIO to work with IVI and the Korea National Institute of Health (KNIH) for a Phase 1/2 clinical trial of INOVIO's COVID-19 vaccine candidate (INO-4800) in South Korea.

IVI will conduct the trial in parallel to INOVIO's Phase 1 INO-4800 study currently underway in the US since April 6, 2020 with 40 healthy adults receiving the vaccine candidate and eventually expanding to older adults.

Dr. J. Joseph Kim, INOVIO's President and CEO, said, "Developing a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is a global imperative, and we're pleased to partner with IVI and KNIH to test INO-4800 in South Korea. Our DNA vaccine platform was one of the first technologies to receive support from CEPI to accelerate a COVID-19 vaccine, and IVI conducting safety and efficacy trials in South Korea is a crucial step forward in evaluating this vaccine."

INOVIO's DNA vaccine platform is also utilized in their MERS vaccine, INO-4700, for which IVI previously conducted Phase I clinical testing with GeneOne Life Science in South Korea.

This news follows the announcement from the Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety made on April 13th that they will adopt a fast-track approval process for COVID-19 vaccine and treatment clinical trials. The period of clinical trial screening will be shortened to seven days (down from 30 days) for substances with experience in use and within 15 days for new materials. Additionally, vaccines developed with a proven safety platform, such as INOVIO's DNA platform, will be exempt from toxicology tests which will minimize data submission and expedite clinical trials. Plumbline Life Sciences (XKRX: 222670) of South Korea also collaborated on this project. Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) and the KNIH and has also pledged their support for IVI's testing efforts.