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Oxford's malaria vaccine shows significant 75% efficacy in early trial

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Being the first malaria vaccine candidate to meet WHO standards, the collaborative efforts of Novavax and Serum Institute of India (SII) aims to produce 200 million doses annually upon further safety and efficacy results



A malaria vaccine created by scientists at the University of Oxford's Jenner Institute has been found to be 77% effective in early-stage trials. It is the first malaria vaccine to meet the WHO's target of 75%.

The Phase IIb trial of the vaccine candidate, R21, enrolled 450 children in Burkina Faso, a country in West Africa.

The vaccine candidate was developed in collaboration with Novavax and the Serum Institute of India (SII). The jab is being hailed as a potential breakthrough and has shown the efficacy of 77% over a follow-up period of 12 months.

R21 is the first malaria vaccine to meet and exceed the World Health Organization's (WHO) vaccine target of 75% efficacy against the deadly disease. A more extensive Phase III trial is now underway involving 4,800 children aged 5-36 months in four countries. Vaccine safety, immunogenicity and efficacy in participants will continue to be assessed for another 12 months.

The Oxford vaccine will be manufactured on a large scale and at low cost by SII, which is also involved in manufacturing the Oxford/AZ Covid-19 vaccine. The malaria vaccine uses Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant to enhance the elicited immune system response.

"Novavax' Matrix-M adjuvant used with the Oxford R21 antigen both minimizes the dose required and thereby increases the number of doses available and stimulates a highly effective immune response that could protect the world's most vulnerable population, children," said Novavax R&D president, Gregory Glenn.

SII is committed to supplying 200 million doses of the vaccine annually after licensure at a very cost-effective price.

Before reaching the inevitable challenges of manufacturing and distribution, the promising Phase IIb results for R21 will have to be confirmed in a larger Phase III trial, which is currently recruiting across four countries in Africa.