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J&J's HIV vaccine to begin human trials

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Singapore: Bringing new hope to millions of people worldwide, the experimental HIV vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson has shown promise in early clinical trials. As per reports the vaccine completely prevented HIV infection in half of the 24 monkeys that got the shot and were exposed to high doses of an aggressive virus.

The results of early clinical study has spurred the reserachers to begin human clinical trials and international trial is underway in 400 healthy volunteers in the United States, East Africa, South Africa and Thailand.

"We are very encouraged by the results of this preclinical HIV vaccine study, and the findings lead to a clear path forward for evaluating this HIV vaccine candidate in humans," lead author Dr Dan Barouch, of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School, said in a statement.

Barouch and colleagues at J&J published two papers online in the journal Science, that tested a two-step vaccine, which involves priming the immune system using a weakened version of the cold virus to sneak HIV genes into the body. The second, boost phase involves injecting individuals with a purified HIV surface protein designed to provoke a strong immune response.

Experts believe a vaccine is the best hope for eradicating the disease that has spread like an epidemic killing nearly 40 million people so far. Dr Barouch pointed that this is the first time since Merck's 2007 failed trial that a major pharmaceutical company has sponsored clinical development of an HIV vaccine.