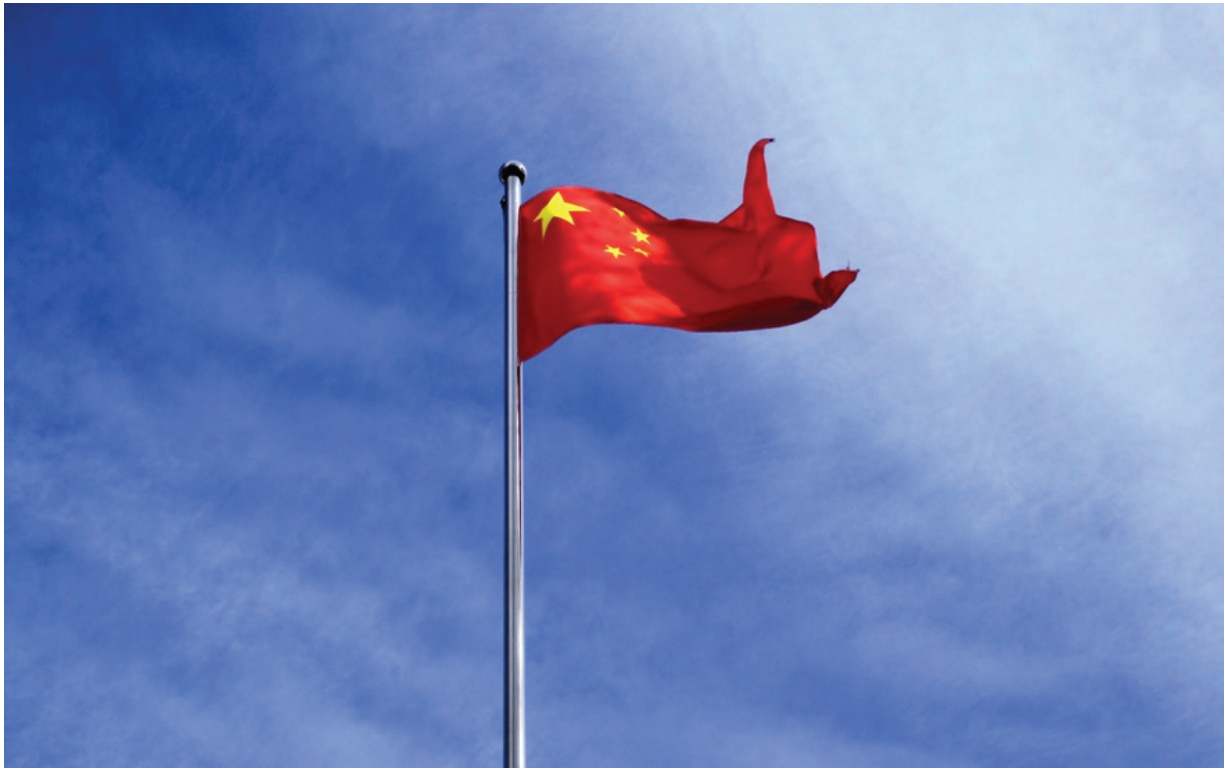


Sinopharm claims COVID-19 vaccine safe in kids aged 3 and up



No details about the side effect profile beyond the claim a Sinopharm subsidiary vaccine is safe and available. (SW1994 / Pixabay)

A clinical trial has found a COVID-19 vaccine in development at a Sinopharm subsidiary to be safe in children aged three to 17 years, according to Chinese state media.

COVID-19 vaccine developers initially focused their clinical trials on adults. Pfizer and Moderna went on to study their candidates in children after showing safety in adults, but even then those trials are only enrolling kids aged 12 years and up. In contrast, China National Biotec Group (CNBG), a subsidiary of Sinopharm, has data on the use of one of its vaccines in kids as young as three years.

Xinhua, China's official state-run press agency, shared details of the study in an article. Summarizing the Xinhua article, Reuters reported the vaccine appears safe in children and shared a quote from CNBG Chairman Yang Xiaoming.

Xiaoming told Xinhua: "It should be noted that for three to five-year-old children, because their immune system is still developing, they must be carefully and closely monitored during vaccination."

There is some doubt about the vaccine tested in the pediatric trial. CNBG has two COVID-19 vaccines in late-phase development. Based on the Xinhua report, Reuters is unsure which of the jabs Xiaoming was discussing. However, researchers have previously disclosed a phase 2 clinical trial of the CNBG vaccine BBIBP-CorV in children aged three to 17 years old, the same age range targeted in the study covered by the Xinhua report, suggesting that may be the candidate discussed by Xiaoming.

A clearer picture of what the CNBG clinical trial means for the prospects of COVID-19 vaccines in young children will only become clear if the data are shared. As it stands, no details about the side effect profile beyond the claim the vaccine is safe and available.

There are reasons to think the studies in children aged 12 years and up will have a bigger impact on the pandemic. While kids of all ages can catch and transmit SARS-CoV-2, younger children appear to be less susceptible to infection and less likely to pass it on to adults or their peers.