Experts happy with Indian Covaxin efficacy results

Bharat Biotech says interim clinical results in Phase-3 clinical trial indicates COVID-19 vaccine is 81% effective

NEW DELHI

The efficacy results of Covaxin, India's indigenously manufactured COVID-19 vaccine, have been welcomed by health experts, who expect a boost in the country's inoculation campaign.

"We expect that confidence and acceptability of the vaccine will increase now. We can also expect the country's vaccine campaign to see a boost now," Dr. Lalit Kant, former head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases Division, Indian Council of Medical Research, told Anadolu Agency.

"I think it is a great achievement of India because they have made the vaccine from scratch," he said. Kant, however, says firms need to come up with complete analysis. "Then we will get to know the actual efficacy of the vaccine," he said.

Covaxin is made by pharmaceutical company Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research.

On Wednesday, the firm announced interim clinical results based on efficacy data in its Phase-3 clinical trial indicated that Covaxin is 81% effective.

In January, when the government announced the approval of two vaccines, questions were raised about the "premature" approval of Covaxin as it had not then completed the Phase-3 trials.

There have been reports of reluctance to take the coronavirus vaccine from various parts of the country since the government began its vaccination campaign in January.

"Today is an important milestone in vaccine discovery, for science and our fight against coronavirus. With today's results from our Phase 3 clinical trials, we have now reported data on our COVID-19 vaccine from Phase 1, 2, and 3 trials involving around 27,000 participants," the firm said in a news statement.

According to the company, the vaccine also has high efficacy against emerging variants.

"It is significant against emerging variants," said Dr. Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director of Bharat Biotech.

"Covaxin demonstrates high clinical efficacy trend against COVID-19 but also significant immunogenicity against the rapidly emerging variants," he added.

Dr. Lakshmi PVM, a professor at the Department of Community Medicine in the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, told Anadolu Agency that people now will be more comfortable using it.

"It is a good development. It will help in a way that people will be more comfortable in taking this vaccine," she said, adding, "There has been some reluctance to this vaccine. I think it will go away by the announcement of the results."

Indian government statistics also show the number of Covaxin doses is very much less as compared to the Covishield vaccine manufactured locally by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India and developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

The results of the Phase-3 trials have come at a time when India is conducting Phase-2 of COVID-19 vaccination across the country. According to India's Health Ministry, over 16 million vaccine doses have been administered across the country so far.

Earlier this week, when the country kicked off the second phase of vaccination, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received his first Covaxin vaccine dose.

The total number of cases in the country was 11,173,761 as of Friday morning, with 157,548 deaths.