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Pfizer vaccine is 'extraordinarily effective' against variants: Studies

Two studies show jab to be over 95% effective against S Africa and UK variants

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The Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine is extraordinarily effective at protecting against severe disease caused by two dangerous variants, according to two studies published Wednesday.

The studies, which are based on the real-world use of the vaccine in Qatar and Israel, suggest that the vaccine can prevent the worst outcomes — including severe pneumonia and death — caused by B.1.1.7, the variant first identified in the UK, and B.1.351, the variant first identified in South Africa.

"At this point in time we can confidently say that we can use this vaccine, even in the presence of circulating variants of concern," said Dr Annelies Wilder-Smith, an infectious disease researcher at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. One of the new studies, which appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, is based on information about more than 200,000 people that was pulled from Qatar's national Covid databases between February 1 and March 31.

In multiple analyses, the researchers found that the vaccine was 87 to 89.5 percent effective at preventing infection with B.1.1.7 among people who were at least two weeks past their second shot. It was 72.1 to 75 percent effective at preventing infection with B.1.351 among those who had reached the two-week point. Over all, it was 97.4 percent effective at preventing any form of the coronavirus, and



Pfizer seeks full FDA nod for Covid-19 jab



Pfizer and the German company BioNTech have become the first companies to apply to the USFDA for full approval of their Covid-19 vaccine for use in people 16 and older. The vaccine is currently being administered to adults in America under an emergency use authorisation granted in December. The approval process is likely to take months. The companies said in a statement on Friday that they had submitted their clinical data, which includes six months of information on the vaccine's safety and efficacy, to the FDA. They plan to submit additional material, including information about the manufacturing of the vaccine, in the coming weeks.

"We are proud of the tremendous progress we've made since December in delivering vaccines to millions of Americans, in collaboration with the US government," Dr Albert Bourla, Pfizer's chief executive, said. Full approval would allow Pfizer and BioNTech to market the vaccine directly to customers. **NYT**

100 per cent effective at preventing severe, critical or fatal disease caused by B.1.1.7 or B.1.351. (This slight difference in effectiveness is likely a result of the fact that the sample sizes were smaller for the subgroups of patients with a documented variant, Dr Abu-Raddad said.)

The second new study, which was published in *The Lancet*, was conducted by

researchers at the Israel Ministry of Health and Pfizer. It is based on more than 230,000 infections that occurred in Israel between January 24 and April 3. During that period, B.1.1.7 accounted for nearly 95 per cent of all cases in the country, which has vaccinated over half of its population.

The researchers found that the vaccine was more than 95 per cent effective at protecting

UK under-40s to get alternative vaccine to Astra

The UK will offer under-40s an alternative to the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine because of concerns about very rare blood clots that so far appear to be more common in younger people. The decision follows a recommendation by UK scientific advisory panel the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

After Mt Everest, virus spreads to other peaks

At least 19 people are being evacuated from a Nepali climbing camp after reports of Covid-19 cases were confirmed there, *CNN* reported. Mingma Sherpa, chairman of the Seven Summits Treks, said four climbers tested positive at the base camp of Dhaulagiri, the seventh-highest peak in the world. Sherpa said 12 other climbers seemed to be in good condition but were being evacuated so they could get tested after developing coughs.

against infection, hospitalisation and death among fully vaccinated people 16 and older. It also worked well in older adults. Among those 85 or older, the vaccine was more than 94 percent effective.

Both studies also reported that two doses of the vaccine provided significantly more protection than one dose did. **NYT**