

Novartis produces first batch of swine flu vaccine

June 12 2009

Swiss drugs giant Novartis has completed a first batch of swine flu vaccine for pre-clinical trials and aims to make a version available in the fall, the company said Friday.

"[Novartis](#) has successfully completed the production of the first batch of [influenza A\(H1N1\) vaccine](#), weeks ahead of expectations," the company said in a statement.

The 10-litre batch "will be used for pre-clinical evaluation and testing and is also being considered for use in clinical trials," it said.

Novartis hopes to start clinical trials in July and "expects licensure in the fall of 2009," it said.

It added that "more than 30 governments have made requests to Novartis to supply them with influenza A(H1N1) vaccine ingredients."

The company used cell-based technology to produce the vaccine, a faster method than the traditional technology that uses eggs, according to Novartis.

Novartis received 289 million dollars (206.8 million euros) last month from the US Department of Health and Human Services for the development of the vaccine.

The World Health Organization declared a [swine flu](#) pandemic on

Thursday, ratcheting up its alert to the maximum level of six.

Swine flu has infected people almost 30,000 people in 75 countries and claimed 144 lives since it was first detected in Mexico in April.

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Citation: Novartis produces first batch of swine flu vaccine (2009, June 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-06-novartis-batch-swine-flu-vaccine.html>

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