

US funding sees Covid-19 antibody trial enter next phase

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UK pharmaceuticals group AstraZeneca said on Monday it will advance trials of a Covid-19 treatment to a crucial third stage, after the United States invested \$486 million (411 million euros) in its development.

The US government's investment will see up to 100,000 doses delivered "towards the end of 2020", with the option for another one million doses next year, AstraZeneca said.

The company is enrolling 6,100 participants in two separate testing regimes of the "long-acting antibody (LAAB)" combination treatment in the United States and other countries, starting "in the next weeks".

One will evaluate its safety and efficacy "to prevent infection for up to 12 months" and involves around 5,000 participants, the company said in a statement to the London Stock Exchange.

The second will evaluate post-exposure prophylaxis and pre-emptive treatment in approximately 1,100 participants, it added.

AstraZeneca said it is also planning additional trials to evaluate the drug in approximately 4,000 patients for the treatment of Covid-19.

"This agreement with the US government will help accelerate the development of our long-acting antibody combination which has the potential to provide immediate and long-lasting effect in both preventing and treating COVID-19 infections," chief executive Pascal Soriot said.

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