

Russia seeks accelerated WHO registration for virus vaccine

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Russia's vaccine was still undergoing trials after its accelerated approval in the country

Russia has applied to the World Health Organization for accelerated registration and pre-qualification of its Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine,

the country's sovereign wealth fund said Tuesday.

Russia announced in August that it had registered the world's first coronavirus vaccine, named after the Soviet-era satellite.

On Tuesday, the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which finances the vaccine, said that accelerated registration would make Sputnik V "available globally in a shorter time frame than usual procedures."

"The Russian Federation has become one of the first countries to apply to WHO for pre-qualification of its vaccine against the novel coronavirus infection," RDIF said in a statement.

When contacted by AFP, the WHO said such requests were "confidential".

According to the Russian statement, "successful pre-qualification will enable Sputnik V to be included in the list of medicines used by international procurement agencies and countries to guide bulk purchasing of medicines."

Some Western scientists have expressed concern over the Russian vaccine, warning that moving too quickly could be dangerous.

The WHO told AFP: "If a product submitted for evaluation is deemed to conform to criteria for inscription on the list, the WHO will publish the results widely."

So far, the WHO said, it "has not yet pre-qualified a vaccine for COVID-19, nor published any emergency use listing."

'Encouraging response'

That is "a risk-based procedure for assessing and listing unlicensed vaccines, therapeutics and in vitro diagnostics with the ultimate aim of expediting the availability of these products to people affected by a public health emergency," the WHO website says.

On Monday, British pharmaceuticals giant AstraZeneca said that trials of its coronavirus vaccine pioneered with Oxford University had shown "encouraging" responses among elderly, as well as younger participants.

It is considered one of the most promising and advanced in the world to combat the global pandemic, which has now claimed the lives of 1.1 million people.

Earlier this month, President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia had registered its second coronavirus vaccine, EpiVacCorona.

Russia has the fourth-highest virus caseload in the world, with a total of 1,547,774 registered infections and 26,589 deaths.

On Tuesday, Russian health authorities reported a record 320 deaths from the coronavirus over the past 24 hours as officials tightened anti-virus restrictions including enforcing mask-wearing in public spaces.

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