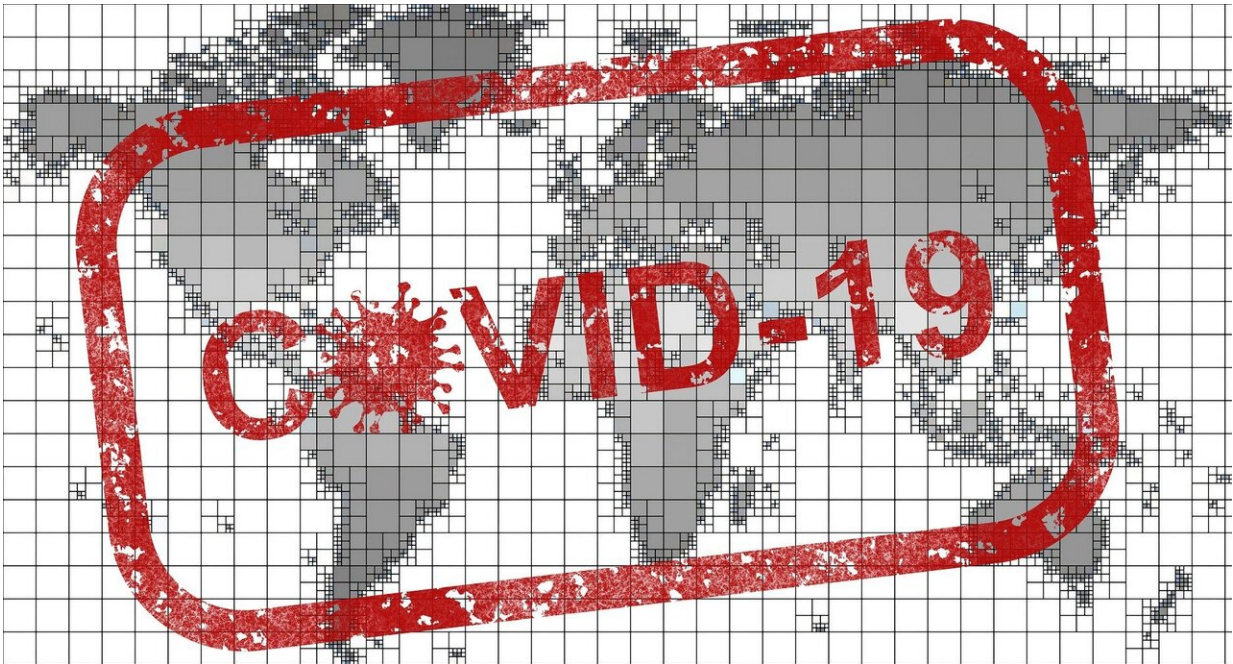


Novavax COVID-19 vaccine news welcomed in South Africa

January 30 2021, by Mogomotsi Magome



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

News that the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine [has shown about 60% efficacy on HIV-positive patients](#) and that it seems to work against the variant of the virus now dominant in South Africa is being welcomed with relief in the country, but further studies are urged.

Results from a small Novavax Inc. study in South Africa suggest the

vaccine does work but not nearly as well as it does against the variant from Britain. Early findings from a British study suggest the vaccine is nearly 96% effective against the older coronavirus and nearly 86% effective against the new variant there.

In South Africa, the new variant now causes more than 90% of new cases and is more infectious than the original virus.

On volunteers who are HIV-positive, preliminary studies in South Africa show the Novavax vaccine appears to be 60% effective. That has been welcomed in a country where nearly 7.7 million people live with the disease.

The South African Medical Association, which represents health practitioners, welcomed the finding but called for more research on other vaccines. The country is set to receive its first batch of AstraZeneca vaccines from the Serum Institute of India on Monday.

"It is necessary to get [clinical data](#) on chronic illnesses including HIV because many of these vaccines are tested on people who are generally healthy, which means we take about three to five years to learn of side effects on people with [chronic illnesses](#)," said the association's chair, Angelique Coetzee.

"At least we now have some data on how they react to HIV-positive patients, but we need to get more scientific information," she said.

She said there needs to be urgency in establishing other vaccines' efficacy against the new variant in South Africa as it is already having a [negative effect](#) on the country.

"We are seeing travel bans on South African flights because there are still so many unanswered questions on the new variant," she said.

The Commission for Gender Equality has greeted the news of the efficacy on HIV-positive patients.

"It is a welcome relief to us in sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa in particular where the majority of HIV-positive people are women. We hope that through further tests and studies the efficiency for HIV-positive people can be more than 80%," said spokesman Javu Baloyi.

"Most women who are HIV-positive are from single-household families and they end up dying and leaving their kids behind, and we don't want to see that situation."

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