

French health minister encourages use of AstraZeneca jab

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French Health Minister Olivier Veran sought to boost confidence in the AstraZeneca vaccine on Monday as he received a dose in front of TV cameras and reporters at a hospital southwest of Paris.

South Africa has delayed the start of its inoculation programme using the jab from the British-Swedish pharmaceutical group over concerns it does not work on a new variant of COVID-19 that originated in the country.

Veran said that the South African variant had not been widely detected in France.

"I continue to recommend vaccination by the AstraZeneca [vaccine](#), which protects against 99 percent of the viruses that are present in our country," Veran said from a [hospital](#) in the town of Melun.

France received 270,000 doses of the jab on Saturday and would take delivery of another 300,000 in the next few days, he added.

The vaccine is to be used as a priority for all [care workers](#), including hospital and nursing home staff, as well as domestic workers.

"I encourage all careworkers to get themselves vaccinated in their hospitals, health centres and all available places in order to protect themselves as fast as possible," Veran said.

The jab distributed by AstraZeneca and developed by the University of Oxford is set to be discussed by WHO experts on Monday amid doubts about its efficacy against the South African variant and against disease in the over-65s.

French President Emmanuel Macron said at the end of January that the shot was "quasi-ineffective for people over 65."

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