

Hong Kong fast-tracks approval for China's Sinovac vaccine

February 18 2021



Hong Kong's government has approved the Chinese-made Sinovac coronavirus vaccine for emergency use

Hong Kong's government on Thursday approved the Chinese-made Sinovac coronavirus vaccine after a panel of experts fast-tracked its

recommendation despite comparatively low efficacy and limited published data.

Officials said the first shipment of one million Sinovac jabs was set to arrive from the mainland on Friday.

The financial hub's delayed inoculation drive will then kick off a week later on February 26 with the elderly, frontline workers and [medical staff](#) to be prioritised.

But officials may face an uphill task persuading residents to take Sinovac's shots in a city where public distrust of Chinese authorities runs deep.

On Tuesday, a government advisory panel unanimously supported Sinovac, saying the benefits of authorising its emergency use outweighed the risks.

Unlike rival vaccines such as those from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca, Sinovac has yet to submit its third-phase clinical trial data to [medical journals](#) for [peer review](#).

Sinovac has been exempted from that hurdle by Hong Kong officials and told they could instead give the information directly to the experts.

The [advisory panel](#) said it had received adequate data from the company.

That data, the panel said, showed an efficacy rate of 62.3 percent when two doses are administered 28 days apart.

Late-stage trials in Brazil had shown an efficacy rate of just above 50 percent—the threshold the World Health Organization uses to decide if a vaccine is worth using.

The efficacy rates for the competitor vaccines are higher—BioNTech has confirmed a 95 percent protection rate when two shots are administered.

Hong Kong's government says it has pre-ordered 22.5 million vaccines for the city of 7.5 million from three companies: Sinovac, BioNTech and AstraZeneca.

Authorities have already approved BioNTech's vaccine while AstraZeneca's is still pending approval.

The first BioNTech shots are expected to arrive in the city by the end of February and authorities have said residents will be able to choose which vaccine they take.

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Citation: Hong Kong fast-tracks approval for China's Sinovac vaccine (2021, February 18) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-hong-kong-fast-tracks-china-sinovac.html>

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