

Londoners receiving AstraZeneca jab dismiss fears

March 16 2021, by Josephine Gruwe-Court



Britain's Prince Charles visits a temporary Covid-19 vaccination centre at Finsbury Park Mosque in east London

Londoners receiving the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine on Tuesday dismissed concerns about its potential risks, after several countries suspended its use due to fears about blood clots.

"I've just had the AstraZeneca jab and I'm very happy with that," said Sofia Harding, a 57-year-old seamstress, at the Science Museum in the British capital.

"I'm not concerned about other countries being a bit cautious because I don't think there's enough evidence," she told AFP.

The low-cost jab, developed by scientists at Oxford University with the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical giant, was initially hailed as a game-changer in the fightback against the virus.

But it has since faced problems internationally, with doubts expressed in some EU countries about its suitability for older people.

Further concerns over cases of blood clots have prompted several countries to halt its rollout, even as regulators and global health experts said it was safe to use.

Those receiving the jab in Britain include Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, who received her first dose earlier this year.

On a visit to a vaccination centre at a mosque in north London with her husband Prince Charles on Tuesday, she told a doctor she had received the AstraZeneca jab.



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"Although it didn't matter. I didn't ask. I don't even ask because I hate injections so much that I shut my eyes... whatever comes out," she said.

The Science Museum in west London is renowned for its [interactive displays](#) but reopened as a vaccination centre this month.

People said they were aware of the controversy but did not take it seriously.

"I think it would be better to have the jab than sit around debating

whether or not it's safe because you could get the virus and then where are you? Very ill," said Harding.

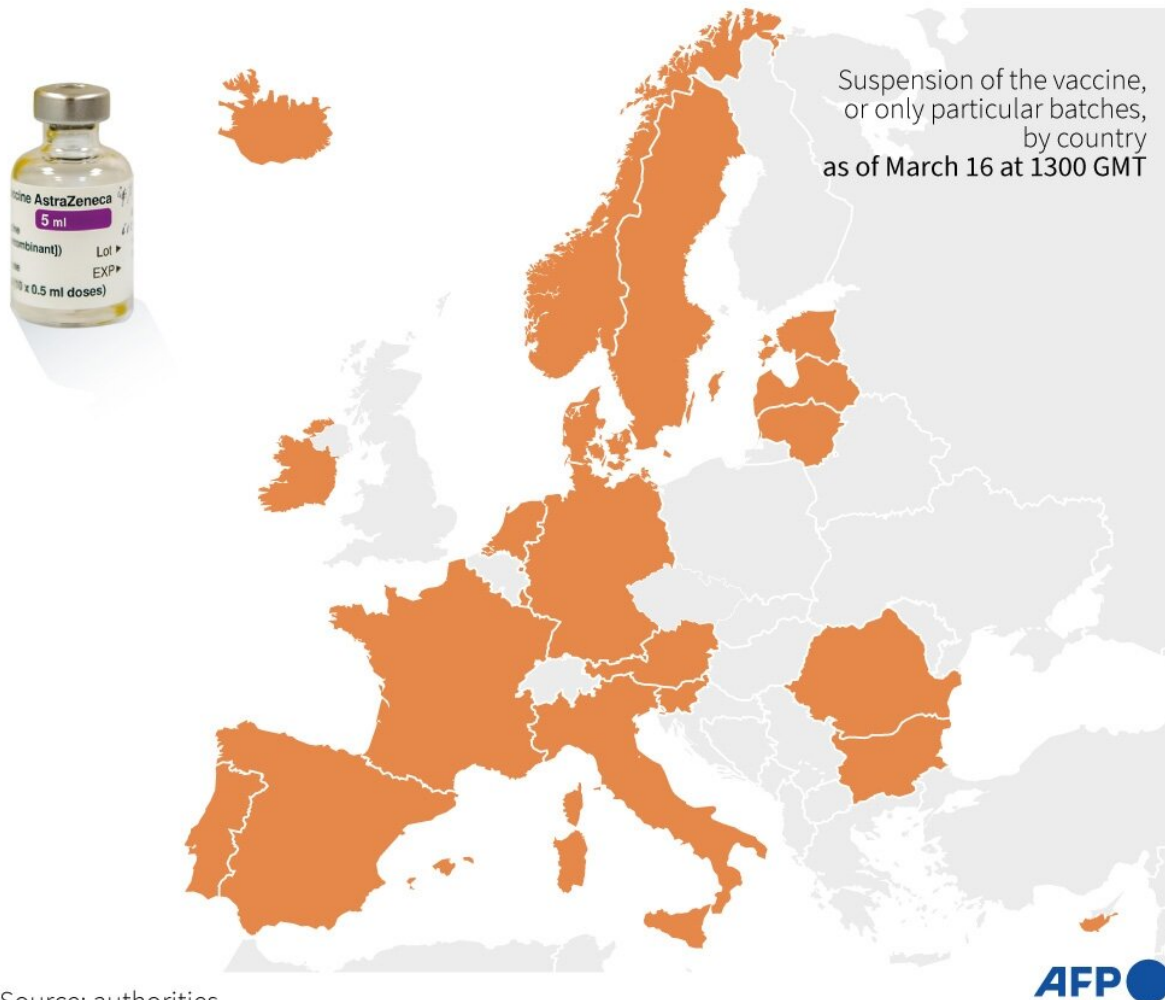
Pros and cons

Giles Johnson, a 57-year-old photographer, also insisted he was "completely relaxed" about getting the AstraZeneca jab rather than the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine also being used in the UK.

British people are not being given a choice and it depends on what has been allocated to each vaccination centre.

"Statistically, people have blood clots as a matter of routine," Johnson said.

Suspension of AstraZeneca vaccine in Europe



Map of Europe showing countries which have suspended the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, or batches of it, as of March 16.

"I think the overall benefits of both vaccines... far exceed the possible negatives."

He was one of several Londoners to suggest the European decisions had

[political motives](#), too—which the countries involved firmly deny.

"Everything's political," he said.

Nick Roscoe, a 56-year-old who works for a [software company](#), agreed.

"Maybe being a bit cynical, I wonder if there aren't political undercurrents," he said after receiving the vaccine with his wife.

"I think there will always be somebody who reacts badly to some injections," he said.

He added, chuckling, that for him, "the only obvious side effect is a desire for red wine, but other than that, I'm OK."

Steve Landrew, a 59-year-old market trader, admitted he had worried about getting the jab, however.

"I was a bit dubious about going through with it," he said, citing the cases of [blood clots](#).



Ellen Prosser, 100, receives the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine in London on January 7

"Obviously it did alarm me but I... weighed it all up, the pros and cons, I thought the pros outweighed the cons and I thought: 'Let's go ahead'," he said.

One deciding factor was the hope being vaccinated will allow him to travel more freely, he said.

"I've got a little bit more freedom to fly, go places."

The Science Museum, like many other major buildings, is being used as a vaccine centre while unable to open during national lockdown.

Its director, Ian Blatchford, welcomed the museum's new use, saying its exhibitions "tell the story of how vaccination has saved millions of lives" and now it can "play a part in ensuring vaccines protect the nation from COVID-19."

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