

Relief, anxiety as Europe resumes AstraZeneca jabs

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There was relief, frustration and fear on Friday as a number of European nations resumed administering the AstraZeneca vaccine after the jabs were suspended over safety fears.

"I'm a bit anxious of course, but what can you do? We have to do this, and we do it," said Valentina, a 42-year-old teacher who was among the first in line to get the jab at the newly reopened vaccine centre at Rome's Termini station.

Roberto, 58, also a teacher, dismissed any worries about the vaccine, telling AFP: "On the contrary, the fear was that they would not let us receive it."

The centre was shut earlier this week after Italy banned the use of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine over fears of links to blood clots, one of several European nations to take action.

It reopened on Friday afternoon following the EU regulator's ruling Thursday that it was "safe and effective"—and a queue of people with appointments quickly formed outside, while others unsuccessfully tried to get a slot.

Most said they had no concerns about being vaccinated with AstraZeneca, although there was some frustration at the suspension of the programme at a time when most of Italy is locked down because of a surge in cases.

"I feel sad because, of course it is better to be safe, to study (the evidence), but in the end nothing changed, so we just lost four days," said Francesco, 53.

'There is a problem'

Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and France are also lifting their suspension of the jab following the EMA's advice—although the latter recommended it only be given to people aged 55 and over.

"I have been a bit worried in the last few days with the suspension of the AstraZeneca [vaccine](#)... I asked myself what did they inject me with?" said Jeanne Capestan, a 52-year-old photo editor in Paris who had her first jab earlier this month.

"But I am very relieved by the decision of the European agency. And I will go and get my second injection with joy and good humour, I can't wait!"

Not everyone shares her view in France, however, where anti-vaccination sentiment is strong.

"Frankly, I won't do it, I don't trust it. They banned it, then they put it back, so there is a problem," said Serena Cherif, another resident of Paris.

In Spain, too, the reactions were mixed.

"When I saw the news, I got very nervous, to tell you the truth," said Laura, a 28-year-old prison officer in Madrid.

"I will get the second injection because the damage is already done, but yes, I am worried about the potential long-term effects on my body."

But Marta Estrada, a 28-year-old psychologist who received her first dose just recently, did not understand what all the fuss was about.

"You must trust in the science. There are people who smoke a packet of cigarettes a day and don't think about it, and then worry about a little jab like this!" she said.

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