Moderna says updated COVID vaccine fares well against new variant

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The Moderna logo is seen at the Moderna campus in Norwood, Massachusetts.

Moderna said Wednesday its updated fall COVID booster, which is pending approval from the Food and Drug Administration, performed well against the highly mutated BA.2.86 variant.

Human trial data showed the shot produced an 8.7-fold increase in neutralizing antibodies against the variant, also known as Pirola, which has been designated a variant under monitoring, the US biotech company said. It added it was submitting the results to a peer-reviewed journal and has shared it with regulatory authorities.

"These data confirm that our updated COVID-19 vaccine will continue to be an important tool for protection as we head into the fall vaccination season," said Moderna's president Stephen Hoge in a statement.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said the new variant may be more capable of causing infection in people who have previously been vaccinated or had the disease.

Moderna's news follows encouraging data from independent labs around the world.

Experiments by Peking University in China, Sweden's Karolinska Institute, and Harvard University showed that both existing vaccines and prior infection conferred a degree of protection.

Pirola has more than 30 mutations in its spike protein compared to the currently dominant XBB.1.5 strain. This raised concerns among scientists because it is a similar number to the mutations between the Delta and Omicron variants during the height of the pandemic.