

Quarantine, not vaccine will stop virus: Italy corona expert

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The world should not expect a vaccine to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus and must instead swallow "the bitter pill" of quarantine measures, a top Italian researcher warned Tuesday.

US President Donald Trump said Monday he had told the heads of top pharmaceutical companies "to accelerate whatever they are doing in terms of a vaccine".

Trump also dismissed suggestion that holding large campaign rallies was unwise while the [virus](#) was spreading, calling it "very safe".

But Massimo Galli, director of the Biomedical Research Institute in Milan whose team isolated the virus's Italian strain last month, told AFP that exactly the opposite was true.

"I would be very happy if it was confirmed that the vaccine could be ready by April," Galli said in an interview.

"But I think this epidemic will not stop thanks to a [vaccine](#), which will never arrive soon enough,"

Galli added.

"It is a bitter pill to swallow (but) quarantine measures and the limitation of individual movements in the most affected areas" will help stop the spread.

Italy has borne the brunt of the European epidemic, recording more than 2,000 cases and 52 deaths from COVID-19 since February 22.

The Mediterranean country of 60 million people has quarantined 11 towns in its northern epicentre, with some 50,000 residents barred from leaving for over a week.

Churches, bars, libraries, schools, museums and town halls have all been closed in the quarantine zone.

Schools, museums and churches have also been shuttered in the Lombardy region around Milan, where 38 of the deaths have occurred, and the neighbouring areas around Bologna and Venice.

Galli said it was too soon say whether these measures have worked.

"We will not know that very soon," he said. "It will take days—and I hope not weeks."

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