

Results from phase 3 trial show baricitinib reduces deaths from COVID-19

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The latest results from a study to assess the efficacy of the arthritis drug, baricitinib, in treating COVID-19 patients have shown that the treatment reduced mortality in those hospitalized with the disease.

The primary objective of the [COV-BARRIER trial](#), sponsored by the drug manufacturer Eli Lilly and Company, was to assess whether baricitinib reduced the need for patients seriously ill with COVID-19 to be treated with ventilation, a hypothesis which the results failed to prove. Baricitinib-treated patients were 2.7% less likely than those receiving standard of care treatment alone to progress to ventilation or [death](#), but the results were not statistically significant.

However, when looking just at deaths, the results showed that treatment with baricitinib in addition to standard care significantly reduced the likelihood of death from any cause by 38%.

Professor Nidhi Sofat from St George's, University of London was Chief Investigator of the COV-BARRIER trial in the UK. Speaking on the results, she said: "These long-awaited results have shown that although baricitinib didn't prevent hospitalized COVID-19 patients from going on to require ventilation, it did have a significant reduction on the number of deaths when used alongside the current standard of care treatments.

"This is the largest reduction in mortality for this group of patients with COVID-19 reported so far—showing an even greater improvement than the results for dexamethasone and remdesivir, which are part of the current standard of care."

Baricitinib is a cytokine inhibitor, a type of drug which suppresses chemicals called cytokines that are released in the body as a response to inflammation. While several cytokine inhibitors have been looked at in treating COVID-19, baricitinib was one of the first to show early promise in the disease, and can be easily administered as an oral medication.

The COV-BARRIER trial recruited 1525 participants worldwide and

these results add to the science behind possible COVID-19 treatments.

Ilya Yuffa, [senior vice president](#) and president of Lilly Bio-Medicines, said: "There remains an urgent need to reduce COVID-related deaths in hospitalized patients, we hope these results will provide further understanding and support for baricitinib's potential role in treatment on top of the current standard of care."

Professor Sofat added: "This disease isn't disappearing any time soon and we need to push to save as many lives from COVID-19 as possible. Hopefully these results demonstrate that we potentially have another tool in our arsenal to combat COVID-19 on top of the current treatments."

Provided by St. George's University of London

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