

2 Vaccines From China's Sinopharm Successfully Contained Covid: Study

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A healthcare worker administers a dose of the Sinopharm Group Co. Covid-19 vaccine.

Vaccines from China's Sinopharm successfully contained Covid-19, according to a study published in a prestigious U.S. medical journal, the first time detailed findings from a late-stage trial of a Chinese shot have appeared in the scientific literature.

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A vial and a box of the Sinopharm Group Co. Covid-19 vaccine at a PT Indah Kiat Pulp & Paper plant in Tangerang, Indonesia, on Wednesday, May 19, 2021. Indonesia has kicked off its privately run vaccination campaign, with companies including Indah Kiat Pulp & Paper inoculating local employees to help Southeast Asia's biggest economy reach herd immunity sooner and revive growth.

Chinese shots, including those from Sinopharm and Sinovac Biotech Ltd., another Beijing-based vaccine maker, have formed the backbone of the vaccine rollout in developing countries ranging from Hungary and Serbia to Seychelles and Peru. The immunizations have come under scrutiny and their manufacturers have been criticized for not sharing adequate data about the shots' safety and efficacy.

The lack of transparency fueled doubts about the shots' ability to contain Covid, especially after cases continued to spike in countries such as Seychelles and Chile that used them to vaccinate a sizable share of their populations. It also stalled approvals by stringent drug regulators and the World Health Organization. While Hong Kong waived the requirement for a peer-reviewed publication to approve the Sinovac vaccine earlier this year, regulators in Singapore are still demanding additional data.

A healthcare worker administers a dose of the Sinovac Biotech Ltd.'s CoronaVac Covid-19 vaccine at a temporary clinic inside the Bicentenario Stadium in Santiago, Chile, on Monday, March 29, 2021. Chile has been vaccinating its population much faster than all other countries in Latin America, with more than 6 million inoculated, though the nation has still seen its daily record number of cases increase.

No Serious Infections

The study published in JAMA included 40,832 volunteers from across the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt and

Jordan. They were equally split into three groups and received either two doses of the vaccines, three weeks apart, or a placebo. Two weeks after the second shot, infections developed in 26 people given the vaccine known as WIV04, 21 of those given the vaccine known as HBO2 and 95 given a placebo shot.

None of the volunteers given an active vaccine developed severe disease, compared with two of those given placebo. The results were initially submitted to JAMA on March 17, Sinopharm's subsidiary China National Biotec Group said in a statement. The paper was accepted for publication on May 12.

The published study revealed some limitations in the vaccine trial. The testing was heavily skewed toward men, who accounted for nearly 85% of the participants. Less than 2% were aged 60 or older, and most were healthy. As a result, there is little evidence about the efficacy and safety among women, the elderly and those with underlying diseases.

Still, the World Health Organization cleared one of Sinopharm's Covid shots earlier this month, paving the way for it to be more widely distributed around the world through the Covax facility that provides access to safe and effective vaccines.

Key details on another Sinovac shot were released in pre-print form, without a formal peer-review or publication. That vaccine has yet to get the green light from the WHO, though more than 380 million doses have been distributed around the world.

- Bloomberg News