The Moscow Times
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Russia Approves 2nd Coronavirus Vaccine – Putin

October 14, 2020



The EpiVacCorona vaccine's approval comes ahead of post-registration trials involving 40,000 volunteers across Russia. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Russia has approved its second coronavirus vaccine, President Vladimir Putin announced Wednesday as the peptide-based shot developed by a Siberian biotech company readies for large-scale trials.

"Novosibirsk's Vektor [State Virology and Biotechnology Center] has registered the second Russian coronavirus vaccine today," Putin said via televised video conference.

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Putin said that Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova and the head of Russia's consumer safety watchdog Anna Popova have both received the EpiVacCorona vaccine as part of clinical trials.

Early trials on 100 volunteers were said to have been successful.

Golikova told Putin that post-registration trials of EpiVacCorona will involve 40,000 volunteers across Russia. Vektor plans to produce the first 60,000 doses of EpiVacCorona "in the nearest future," she added.

Health officials have so far declined to answer questions about EpiVacCorona's initial trial results or the approval process, saying that they were reviewing the vaccine for safety and quality.

Golikova added during the video conference that a third candidate coronavirus vaccine will receive government approval sometime in December.

Vektor is a former Soviet bioweapons research lab and, in addition to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is one of two sites in the world that house smallpox stockpiles. Vektor also houses Ebola samples.

Putin approved Russia's first Covid-19 vaccine, named Sputnik V in a nod to the Soviet launch of the world's first satellite, on Aug. 11. Sputnik V began large-scale trials on 40,000 volunteers in September. Its developer, the Moscow-based Gamaleya research center, is expected to wrap up the Phase 3 trials sometime around summer 2021.

Russia is the world's fourth-most affected country by the coronavirus pandemic with a total of 1,340,409 cases.

It has seen its number of new infections more than double within a month and set single-day records in each of the past six days. On Wednesday, Russia confirmed more than 14,000 new cases for the first time since the start of its outbreak in the spring.

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