

COVID-19 preventative vaccine trial for healthcare workers

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COVID-19 preventative vaccine trial for healthcare workers Credit: MCRI

Professor Kathryn North AC, Director of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia, has announced its infectious disease researchers are preparing to roll-out a multi-center randomised

controlled clinical trial of the BCG vaccine against COVID-19.

The trial has been endorsed by the Director-General of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom, who has called for global support and assistance in the fight against COVID-19.

Professor North said, "Australian medical researchers have a reputation for conducting rigorous, innovative [trials](#). This trial will allow the vaccine's effectiveness against COVID-19 symptoms to be properly tested, and may help save the lives of our heroic frontline healthcare workers."

Led by Professor Nigel Curtis, a clinician-scientist who leads MCRI's Infectious Diseases Research Group, the BRACE trial builds on previous studies which showed that BCG reduces the level of virus when people are infected with similar viruses to SARS-CoV-2.

Professor Curtis said, "We hope to see a reduction in the prevalence and severity of COVID-19 symptoms in healthcare workers receiving the BCG vaccination."

"We aim to enroll 4000 healthcare workers from hospitals around Australia, including the Melbourne Campus' Royal Children's Hospital to allow us to accurately say whether it can lessen the severity of COVID-19 symptoms. And we need to enroll them in the coming weeks, so the clock is definitely ticking," said Professor Curtis.

Although originally developed against tuberculosis, and still given to over 130 million babies annually for that purpose, BCG also boosts humans' 'frontline' immunity, training it to respond to germs with greater intensity.

The researchers hope this improved 'innate' immunity will provide

crucial time to develop and importantly, validate, a specific anti-SARS-CoV-2 vaccine.

There are currently no vaccines or other proven preventative therapeutic interventions available to protect [health care workers](#) at the frontline exposed to the COVID19 virus.

The proposed trial is based on an existing MCRI trial, which has allowed rapid but thorough human ethics approvals, and involves sites across Australia. The first sites to be announced are The Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Medical Centre. More sites are expected to be announced in coming days.

Professor North said, "The Federal and State Health Departments, together with Australian and international philanthropists, have shown a willingness and capacity to step up to fund a number of COVID-19 related trials".

"Using rapidly sourced and immediately deployable funds, we will be relentless in our pursuit of preventions and treatments for this unprecedented pandemic. These trials will allow the rapid advancement of the most promising candidates to clinical practice, giving us the most number of shots on goal against COVID-19 as possible."

More information: More information on the trial can be found at mcri.edu.au.au/news

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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