

EXPERTS RAISE QUESTIONS OVER 'HASTY' NOD TO VACCINES

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Gagandeep Kang **VENKATACHALAPATHY C**

Several experts have raised concern over the “hasty approval” granted to the COVID-19 vaccines despite the lack of adequate efficacy data.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation on Sunday accorded approval for restricted emergency use of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), and the indigenously developed vaccine Covaxin of Bharat Biotech.

“I’m completely unaware of any data that suggests that Covaxin has any efficacy against any SARS-CoV-2 strain, let alone the U.K. strain,” Gagandeep Kang, Professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore, said in an interview to CNBC-TV18.

A doctor-cum-research head of a lab affiliated to a government research lab also expressed reservations.

“At this point, I wouldn’t advise Covaxin. All we seem to know is that it’s safe and so may not be harmful but efficacy is a different matter and needs to be proved,” the expert said requesting anonymity.

Scientific logic

“In the interest of transparency, we ask that the regulator share detailed rationale or the decision along with disclosure of data... We are baffled to understand what scientific logic has motivated top experts in the SEC (Subject Expert Committee) to approve this vaccine (Covaxin) post haste,” Malini Aisola, of the All India Drug Action Network, said in a statement.

However, Randeep Guleria, Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, referred to Covaxin as a “backup vaccine” and added that it is to be used if it was not clear how efficacious the SII vaccine would be.

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