

Merck Stops Developing COVID Vaccine, Says 'Natural Infection' Leads To Better Herd Immunity

By Krizzia Paolyn Reyes - Feb 01, 2021

U.S.-based vaccine company Merck announced on Jan. 25 that they will stop developing vaccines for the 2019 novel coronavirus since natural infections are better than vaccines in producing results leading to herd immunity.

Merck, or MSD outside of the United States and Canada, announced on the 25th of January that they will discontinue any further developments on their SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 vaccine candidates, V590 and V591, and instead plans to focus its SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 research strategy and production capabilities on advancing two therapeutic candidates, MK-4482 and MK-7110, as [written on their website](#).

(FF Editorial: for easy reading and for your convenient fact checking we quote from the Merck website below as an additional insert):

[Merck website:](#)

<https://www.merck.com/news/merck-discontinues-development-of-sars-cov-2-covid-19-vaccine-candidates-continues-development-of-two-investigational-therapeutic-candidates/>

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KENILWORTH, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Merck (NYSE: MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, today announced that the company is discontinuing development of its SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 vaccine candidates, V590 and V591, and plans to focus its SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 research strategy and production capabilities on advancing two therapeutic candidates, MK-4482 and MK-7110.

This decision follows Merck's review of findings from Phase 1 clinical studies for the vaccines. In these studies, both V590 and V591 were generally well tolerated, but the immune responses were inferior to those seen following natural infection and those reported for other SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 vaccines.

Merck continues to advance clinical programs and to scale-up manufacturing for two investigational medicines, MK-7110 and MK-4482 (molnupiravir); molnupiravir is being developed in collaboration with Ridgeback Bio.

"We are grateful to our collaborators who worked with us on these vaccine candidates and to the volunteers in the trials," said Dr. Dean Y. Li, president, Merck Research Laboratories. "We are resolute in our commitment to contribute to the global effort to relieve the burden of this pandemic on patients, health care systems and communities."

Due to the discontinuation, the company will record a charge in the fourth quarter of 2020. The charge will be included in Merck's generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) results, but will not impact non-GAAP results.

Merck and its collaborators plan to submit the results of the Phase 1 studies for V590 and V591 for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In addition to advancing the development and production of MK-7110 and MK-4482, Merck will continue to conduct SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 research. Merck will also continue to evaluate the potential of the measles-virus vector and vesicular stomatitis virus vector-based platforms and pursue broader pandemic-response capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for our company and our industry to continue to invest in research to address threats to health security.

About Merck's therapeutic candidates

- MK-7110 (formerly CD24Fc) is a potentially first-in-class investigational recombinant fusion protein that modulates the inflammatory response to SARS-CoV-2, principally by targeting a novel immune pathway checkpoint. Interim results from a Phase 3 study showed a greater than 50 per cent reduction in the risk of death or respiratory failure in patients hospitalized with moderate to severe COVID-19. Full results from this study are expected in the first quarter of 2021. In December, Merck announced a supply agreement with the U.S. government to advance the manufacturing and initial distribution of MK-7110 ([link](#)).*
- Molnupiravir (MK-4482) is an oral novel investigational antiviral agent being developed in collaboration with Ridgeback Bio. Molnupiravir is currently being evaluated in Phase 2/3 clinical trials in both the hospital and out-patient settings. The primary completion date for the Phase 2/3 studies is May 2021. The company anticipates initial efficacy data in the first quarter of 2021, which Merck plans to share publicly if clinically meaningful.*

Forward-Looking Statement of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA

- This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA (the "company") includes "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company's management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. There can be no guarantees with respect to pipeline products that the products will receive the necessary regulatory approvals or that they will prove to be commercially successful. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.*
- Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of the global outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19); the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company's ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company's patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.*

End of quotation from Merck website

These findings are in conjunction with the words of the [Great Barrington Declaration](#), authored by three highly qualified epidemiologists from the universities of Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford. The declaration bids an end to the widespread lockdown policies.

- "As immunity builds in the population, the risk of infection to all - including the vulnerable - falls." the authors wrote.
- "Our goal should therefore be to minimize mortality and social harm until we reach herd immunity," they added.

As part of President Trump's Operation Warp Speed, Merck is said to receive around \$356 million from the U.S. government in order to manufacture 60,000-100,000 doses of the two drugs until June 30, 2021.

"Building upon the promising clinical findings to date for MK-7110, Merck is pleased to be collaborating with the U.S. Government to advance the manufacture and distribution of this candidate for patients with serious COVID-19 disease," [said Dr. Roger M. Perlmutter](#), president, Merck Research Laboratories.

Former Vice President of Pfizer Dr. Michael Yeadon denied the need for vaccines for COVID-19.

"There is absolutely no need for vaccines to extinguish the pandemic. I've never heard such nonsense talked about vaccines. You do not vaccinate people who aren't at risk from a disease. You also don't set about planning to vaccinate millions of fit and healthy people with a vaccine that hasn't been extensively tested on human subjects." Yeadon said.

Yeadon also explained that ***it "has less than a 0.03 percent fatality rate and most of those people, I believe 92 percent or above, have other health problems; we're making a vaccine at warp speed for a virus that doesn't look like it's going to need a vaccine."***

He continued by saying that ***"it is possible, but I don't believe it is desirable, nor do I believe that it's safe," with as much as "15 per cent of the very healthy young volunteers (experiencing) significant side effects."***

So far, experts say that nothing special has really happened to those who received the vaccination and people will still continue to wear masks and practice social distancing even after being vaccinated, according to Life Site News.