

# Vaccine development is a burning issue across the world now

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**India may get COVID-19 Vaccine by March 2021 as Multiple Manufacturers are Working on it: Say Experts**

**Safety, efficacy and distribution without discrimination of COVID-19 vaccines are as important as its accessibility**

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The world at large pins hopes that vaccines will be the next big thing to prevent the increasing curve of COVID-19. Currently, the researchers are racing to create one, but how long it will take to come to the fore is a curious question; and by what time entire India will get access to COVID-19 vaccine? Where do we stand in COVID-19 vaccine development? All these aspects were brought to discussion during Episode-9 of the HEAL-Thy Samvaad, organised by the 'Healthcare Advocacy Group' — HEAL Foundation in association with ICCIDD on 15th Oct' 2020.

While addressing India Vaccine Accessibility e-Summit in HEAL-Thy Samvaad and throwing light on — where do we stand in COVID-19 vaccine development, Dr Suresh Jadav, Executive Director, Serum Institute of India, Pvt Ltd., Pune, said, "India may get COVID-19 vaccine by March 2021 provided the regulators signal with the processes fast as multiple manufacturers are working on it. India is heading fast towards vaccine development as two manufacturers are already in phase-3 trial and one in the phase-2 trial, while more players are joining the race. Usually, vaccine development takes 8-10 years, but this is the third time we are able to produce this one in a short time. The WHO has also taken initiative to make the process fast and easy."

"We can produce 700-800 million vaccine dosages every year once the things are streamlined. Although

55% of the population is below 50 years of age, yet as per the availability of vaccines, healthcare workers should get the vaccines first, then people over 60 years of age with comorbidities followed by the rest of the populace. As far as Serum Institute is concerned, we will be ready with 60-70 million dosages of vaccines by December 2020, but that will come in the market in 2021 after the clearance of licencing. Thereafter, we will produce more and more dosages by the permission of the govt.," added Dr Jadav.

During HEAL-Thy Samvaad, while speaking on the COVID Vaccination & Consumers Rights, Prof. Bejon Kumar Misra, International Consumer Policy Expert, Founder, JAGOGRAHAK.COM, Editor, The Aware Consumer, said, "Definitely, the vaccines will be a vital component in finally addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is important that the vaccine is thoroughly tested before rollout. For this, the government should involve experts from across the sectors such as experts from NGOs and private sectors. And the vaccine should be accessible to every section of society. Today, technology is the biggest enabler, which will help in this direction. In a nutshell, safety, efficacy and distribution without discrimination of COVID-19 vaccines are as important as its accessibility."

While speaking on the accessibility conundrum of COVID vaccine in HEAL-Thy Samvaad, Dr J L Meena, Joint Director, NHA, said, "Of course, to have a check on the upsurge of COVID-19 infection, the vaccine is quintessential. However, the biggest challenge lies in its accessibility. The mechanism of the supply chain should also be redefined so that the distribution turns out equitably. For this, we need to prioritise the accessibility depending upon the vulnerability of the populace and take some strong action within the time limit. Effective governance is also required to carry out the judicious accessibility of the vaccine, which we have already."

Elaborating on the status of the vaccine development during HEAL-Thy Samvaad, Mr Samir Deb, Pharmaceutical Professional, Consultant Vaccine & Public Affairs Consultant, South East Asia, said, "Vaccine development is a burning issue across the world now. Worldwide, there are 40 candidates in the race of vaccination. In India, 3 vaccines are going in the phase-3 clinical trial. However, COVID-19 crisis requires accelerated pathways for vaccine development. Proven success factors of H1N1 and Ebola have turned out as guiding principles in COVID-19 vaccine development. Union Health Minister has asserted that 400 million vaccines will be made available by next year. Hopefully, 20-25 crore population will get a vaccine next year. Ensuring accessibility for 80% of the population is a huge task indeed."

Recently, while attending an online WHO question-and-answer session, Ms Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organization, reiterated the WHO's stance against allowing the virus to spread unchecked to reach herd immunity, emphasizing that the concept should be discussed only within the context of a vaccine.

Adding further, she said, "Once we have a vaccine, we can aim to have population immunity — herd immunity — because you'll need to vaccinate at least 70 percent of people, have them protected, to really break the transmission."

While moderating the HEAL-Thy Samvaad on Vaccine Accessibility in India, Mr Atul Sharma, Founder & Managing Director, HealthScape, said, "Historically, we never expected any unprecedented pandemic like COVID-19 but within a year, we are at the verge of vaccine development. And now, we are prioritising how to allocate the vaccines to a high-risk population. However, vaccination to only high risk population will not work, we need to ensure the accessibility to 80% of the populace."

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