ANDBANK
Private Bankers

Flash note
26/10/2020

Alex Fusté
@AlexfusteAlex
alex.fuste@andbank.com

Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine trials offer hope for elderly.

AstraZeneca said on Monday that Its COVID-19 Vaccine “produces robust immune response in elderly patients as it generates a similar immune response in both younger and older adults”. AstraZeneca also said that the vaccine “could be made available for vulnerable patients before the end of the year”.

“Immunogenicity blood tests carried out on a subset of older trial participants show that the vaccine triggers protective antibodies and T-cells among the elderly”, emphasizing that "it is encouraging to see that immunogenicity responses were similar between older and younger adults and that reactogenicity was lower in older adults”, an AstraZeneca spokesperson told Reuters.

A spokesperson from Astrazeneca added that "the analysis of the results further build the body of evidence for the safety and immunogenicity of the AZD1222," referring to the technical name of the vaccine.

Although the finding raises hope that the elderly will be able to build up some form of immunity against the disease, further analysis for this age group is required according to the media.

The FT is also reporting today the “new and promising data from Astrazeneca, even if it's still pretty preliminary”. (https://www.ft.com/content/b15446e5-66f7-4e6a-947a-1b638769ff79)

What next?

Details of the tests are expected to be published shortly in a clinical journal (FT). But data gathered so far “echoes data released in July that demonstrated that the vaccine had generated robust immune responses in a group of healthy adults aged between 18 and 55” (FT).

Adrian Hill, the professor leading the Oxford vaccine programme, said “medics and high-risk patients could receive doses of AZD1222 by the end of the year”. Researchers are planning to seek emergency approval for vulnerable patients once the interim data becomes available. “The initial license would be for emergency use, not full approval,” professor Hill told.

Regarding massive vaccination programs, he said that “regulators will want to see more data on safety and efficacy before they give a license to vaccinate everybody.” “So what we're looking for this year is an 'emergency use' authorization that will allow us to go and vaccinate those most at risk as a priority, and then, early next year, everybody else.”

In an assessment of how the vaccination programme could unfold, Professor Hill said: “I’d be very surprised if the pandemic isn't very clearly on the way down by late spring, at least in this country”.

While at least one source corroborated the company's optimistic spin on the data, another scientist quoted by the FT cautioned that the data are hardly conclusive, and for now, at least, it's impossible to make a statement about timing with certainty.

A vaccine that works is seen as a game-changer and for that reason we will have to closely follow the development of events. At the moment, all I can say is that the news from Astrazeneca Labs are good. I hope they are also credible.