

Race for a vaccine

The early-stage clinical trial for a Covid-19 vaccine, developed by scientists from Duke-NUS Medical School and Arcturus Therapeutics, has started in Singapore, with the screening of volunteers. SingHealth's Investigational Medicine Unit is administering the trial, which is expected to last until October. SingHealth's Associate Professor Jenny Low takes The Straits Times on a walkthrough of the process ahead of the first vaccinations, which are expected to start next week.



VOLUNTEERS

- About 100 people aged between 21 and 80 years. During pre-screening, they are asked to provide details such as their age, height and weight, as well as medical history.
- Those selected are briefed about what is expected of them and the potential side effects.
- Volunteers are compensated for their time and inconvenience. If they agree to proceed, they sign a consent form.

SCREENING



- Volunteers go for more detailed medical screening, involving procedures that patients usually undergo during medical check-ups, such as an electrocardiogram of heart activity, and giving blood and urine samples for testing.
- Subjects must be healthy, with no underlying medical conditions.



DOSING

- Before the vaccination is given, volunteers undergo another round of basic health checks.
- After the injection is given in the arm, they are monitored for about four hours at the SingHealth Investigational Medicine Unit (IMU) at the Singapore General Hospital, before being discharged.
- They must record any changes or side effects, and monitor the severity of any symptoms, such as headaches or muscle aches, on a three-point scale of mild, moderate or severe.
- The principal investigator and coordinator is on call 24 hours a day, in case symptoms become severe.



FOLLOW-UP

- Volunteers report to the SingHealth IMU on specific days over the next few months, so that blood samples can be drawn.

Three key aims of the trial:

- Assess the vaccine's safety, such as if there are any severe side effects.
- Determine the appropriate dosage.
- Study whether the immune system mounts a protective response against the virus by generating antibodies and T-cells.



Those interested in taking part in the trial should contact the SingHealth Investigational Medicine Unit at imu@singhealth.com.sg or call 6323-7544/8318-0685