

Canada's plant-based COVID vaccine jumps latest hurdle on way toward approval

Canada's first homegrown vaccine for COVID-19 is showing promising antibody results in hundreds of participants in a Phase 2 trial and could be ready for a final authorization request this summer, the drugmaker says.

Nathalie Landry, the executive vice-president for scientific and medical affairs for Quebec City-based Medicago, said the vaccine appears to produce 10 times the antibodies as are seen in people who have had COVID-19.

"It's very good news," said Landry.

"So, based on these results, let's say we're quietly confident that we will be in a position to demonstrate good efficacy of the vaccine."

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A Phase 3 trial for Medicago with 30,000 volunteers is already underway in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, and will expand to Brazil this week.

The Phase 3 trial is the final step before Health Canada can decide whether to approve the vaccine, something Landry hopes can happen this summer.

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Canada signed a deal in October to buy 20 million doses of Medicago's vaccine, with an option for 56 million more. But most Canadians will be vaccinated before Medicago's shot is approved, leaving its role in Canada unclear.

"We have been discussing that situation with the Canadian government," said Landry.

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