

Slovakia suspends use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine as a recipient dies



FILE PHOTO: A medical worker holds a bottle of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine in this file photo

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PRAGUE (Reuters) -Slovakia's Health Ministry said on Tuesday it was suspending the use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine for people getting their first doses, after experts reviewed the death of a recipient.

The state drug regulator, SUKL, said last week that

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"The Health Ministry is considering various options at the moment, how to proceed with this issue," spokeswoman Zuzana Eliasova said. "At the moment, people waiting for their second dose are being inoculated with the AstraZeneca vaccine."

She said further steps would be announced later in the week.

The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Some European countries briefly halted inoculations using the vaccine made by AstraZeneca in March when concerns surfaced over very rare blood clots.

But the European Union's European Medicines Agency has said repeatedly that the vaccine's potential benefits outweigh any risks from side effects.

Germany, which had restricted the shot to people over 60, said last week it would make AstraZeneca available to all adults, subject to consulting a doctor. In Norway, a government-appointed commission has recommended excluding it from the state's vaccination programme.

Slovakia, a country of 5.5 million people, has given 1.26 million people a first dose, and just under 600,000 people both doses.

Slovakia currently uses vaccines from
Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna as well as
AstraZeneca. It has also been considering
administering the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine,
which has not been cleared by the EMA.

(Reporting by Robert Muller and Jason Hovet; Editing by Kevin Liffey)

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