

Coronavirus Vaccine Shipped From Massachusetts to National Institute of Infectious Disease

By Michael P. Norton, State House News Service

A Cambridge-based company has shipped vials of its novel coronavirus vaccine, which were manufactured at a plant in Norwood, to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) for further research.

Moderna Inc. announced the news late Monday, saying its first batch of mRNA-1273 vaccine was funded by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and will be used by government researchers in what's known as a Phase 1 Study at the National Institutes of Health.

"I want to thank the entire Moderna team for their extraordinary effort in responding to this global health emergency with record speed. The collaboration across Moderna, with NIAID, and with CEPI has allowed us to deliver a clinical batch in 42 days from sequence identification," Juan Andres, chief technical operations and quality officer at Moderna, said in a statement. "This would not have been possible without our Norwood manufacturing site, which uses leading-edge technology to enable flexible operations and ensure high-quality standards are met for clinical-grade material."

To date, Moderna has manufactured and released more than 100 batches of vaccines and therapeutics from its Norwood site for human clinical trials. The company described mRNA-1273 as part of its "core prophylactic vaccines modality, which has had six positive Phase 1 clinical readouts across six different vaccines over the past four years."

A novel coronavirus was identified early this year in Wuhan, Hubei Province, in China. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control now says the virus has been detected in 32 locations internationally, including the United States. The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19, as this coronavirus is known, is “not fully understood,” according to the CDC, with reported illnesses ranging from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death.

The World Health Organization on Monday estimated 2,595 deaths to date in China, and 23 COVID-19 deaths in 29 countries outside of China.

As of Feb. 24, there has been one confirmed case of this novel coronavirus in Massachusetts, and the Department of Public Health says the risk to residents of Massachusetts remains low. Mass. DPH has not issued an update on the single confirmed coronavirus patient in the state since announcing the confirmed case February 1.

“While person-to-person spread among close contacts has been detected with this virus, at this time this virus is NOT currently spreading in the community in the United States,” according to the DPH.

Moderna currently has strategic alliances for development programs with AstraZeneca, Merck Inc. and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).