Massachusetts-based Moderna Therapeutics announces positive results for COVID-19 vaccine

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Cambridge-based Moderna Therapeutics is investing in manufacturing capacity in hopes of producing millions of doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, the company said Monday as it announced positive results from the first phase of its vaccine clinical trials.

The company's COVID-19 vaccine candidate, mRNA-1273, was "generally safe and well tolerated" by eight volunteers who participated in the phase 1 study led by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and those eight volunteers produced antibodies at levels at least equal to what's found in the blood of patients who have recovered from COVID-19, the company said.

Moderna also announced that a study involving mice infected with COVID-19 produced encouraging results. The study found that Modern's MRNA-1273 vaccine candidate "provided full protection against viral replication in the lungs" of the mice.

"With today's positive interim Phase 1 data and the positive data in the mouse challenge model, the Moderna team continues to focus on moving as fast as safely possible to start our pivotal Phase 3 study in July and, if successful, file a BLA," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel said, referring to a biologic license application. "We are investing to scale up manufacturing so we can maximize the number of doses we can

produce to help protect as many people as we can from SARS-CoV-2.”

Word of the positive trial results sent the company’s stock soaring before the markets opened Monday morning on Wall Street. Bloomberg News reported that shares of Moderna were up 26 percent ahead of the opening bell. Last week, Dr. Anthony Fauci singled out Moderna and it’s mRNA-1273 vaccine candidate when talking about the multi-pronged efforts to develop therapeutics treatments and a vaccine for COVID-19.

“The phase one will directly go into phase two, three, in late spring, early summer. And if we are successful, we hope to know that in the late fall and early winter,” Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told a U.S. Senate committee.