

Studies show good response to J&J jab

Side effects observed in follow-up studies of health workers vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) shot in the Sisonke Study are similar to those in other parts of the world, and other vaccines.



Professor Glenda Gray. Image supplied

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) collaborated with J&J on the investigator-led collaborative Sisonke Study, which saw close to 500,000 healthcare workers receiving the single-dose vaccine.

The lead investigator and SAMRC chief executive officer, Professor Glenda Gray, said the vaccines - whether it is a J&J or Pfizer - will reduce the risk of severe disease.

“ They may not protect you from infection but they do protect you or reduce your risk from severe disease. ”

According to the professor, they are following up on all the healthcare workers that had breakthrough infections – cases where fully vaccinated individuals test positive for coronavirus – and they are currently adjudicating them to see if their illness was mild or severe.

“However, most of the breakthrough infections have been mild and only a handful have been severe,” she said.

Most breakthrough infections have been due to the variant that is currently driving the third wave in the country. Researchers are also looking at boosters for the J&J vaccine, about six months after the first vaccination.

In the meantime, Gray said “sub-studies” are being conducted with the single-dose vaccine, looking at HIV-infected healthcare workers; pregnant and lactating women, and healthcare workers with comorbidities to understand their immune response compared to other parts of the world.

“We still believe that healthcare workers must use the personal protective equipment. They must use masks, wash their hands and observe social distancing,” said Gray.

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