

Discover & Deliver: Clinical Research Remains Essential as New COVID Variants Emerge



Emerging news about new variants of COVID-19 in the UK, South Africa, and Brazil have led to concerns the vaccine may be less effective against the evolving strains of the virus.

Yet, positive news this week from both Pfizer and Moderna indicate there may not be as much cause for concern as some initially feared, shedding light on the importance of ongoing clinical research.

What's new: A study [released Wednesday night](#) indicated that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is effective against the mutation in the UK. While there was a small difference in the antibodies produced against the South Africa strain, [BioNTech stated](#) the difference was “unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in the effectiveness of the vaccine.”

Additionally, on Monday, [Moderna announced](#) their vaccine remains effective against the variant in the UK, but there is a six-fold decrease in the antibodies produced against the strain in South Africa. “Out of an abundance of caution,” the company will begin to test a vaccine booster against the variant in South Africa.

What's next: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines may not be the only game in town.

[Early next week](#), Johnson & Johnson is expected to release the results of the 45,000-person Phase 3 clinical trial. Their one-dose vaccine candidate only requires refrigeration at standard temperatures, giving the vaccine two potential advantages as the countries around the world struggle to effectively deploy the current authorized vaccines.

Why it matters: We have long known that we must follow the science towards effective vaccines and therapeutics. Continued clinical research is critical to ensuring the science keeps pace with the emerging threats the virus poses.

Around the world, this important work continues. In the U.S. alone, there are over [1,000 clinical trials](#) taking place in all 50 states across 96% percent of Congressional Districts.

This virus may seem relentless, but science is, too. We remain confident that the science will lead us where we need to go.

—Kelly Anderson, Senior Director, Health and Drug Policy, Global Innovation Policy Center