

Thailand Halts AstraZeneca Vaccinations Following Concerns in Europe

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The Prime Minister and Cabinet have put off on receiving the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination after reports emerged from Europe of blood clots forming among some recipients and a pending review by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) expected to take one to two weeks.

Adviser to the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), Honorary Professor Dr. Piyasakol Sakolsatayathorn indicated today that Denmark, Australia and several countries in Europe, which have administered a combined 1 million plus doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have reported the discovery of a side effect in which blood clots form and lead to undesired symptoms. The vaccination has been halted in those countries and prompted Thai physicians to consider the situation.

Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Siriraj Hospital Dr. Prasit Wattanapa elaborated that AstraZeneca has distributed 1 million doses of ABV 5300 to 17 countries in the European Union, which after being administered, were tied to the death of one person in Denmark and several cases of blood clots. He clarified that the outcomes have yet to be directly attributed to the vaccine but safety protocols mandate that it must be suspended for two weeks pending an investigation.

Iceland and Norway have announced similar suspensions of vaccinations. The EMA has however, declared it has not officially called for a halt on use of the vaccine and supported its safety.

Similar pauses have been announced in Austria, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Latvia. All of the countries received the ABV 5300 vaccine, which Thailand has not.

Head of the Center of Excellence in Clinical Virology at the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University Dr. Yong Phupaworawan explained today that with a mass vaccination, the chance of discovering an unwanted side effect is possible and should be investigated to see if there are any ties between the vaccination and the symptoms. He confirmed the probe is warranted, as is the halt in the vaccination program, while noting that venous thrombosis is three times more likely in people of African and European descent than in Asians.

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