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CORONAVIRUS IN PAKISTAN

CONFIRMED CASES

585,435

REPORTED DEATH

13,076

SINDH

258,904

PUNJAB

174,191

ISLAMABAD

44,921

BALOCHISTAN

19,084

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

73,007

AJK/GB

10,371 / 4,957

RECOVERED CASES

555,242

*Stats as of 04 March, 2021 - 07:18am, Provided by
Ministry of National Health Services Regulations &
Coordination, Government of Pakistan



CORONAVIRUS CASES DECLINE IN PAKISTAN

NCOC relaxes COVID restrictions

MN Report
ISLAMABAD - The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) recently relaxed a number of restrictions on commercial activities and official work. The step was taken in view of the declining trend of COVID-19 cases prevailing in the country, According to a statement, the

NCOC took comprehensive review of the existing Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs). Under the new directives, time limit on commercial activities has been lifted and condition of 50 per cent attendance at workplaces removed with immediate effect. Permission to hold indoor wedding ceremonies and opening of cinemas and shrines has been granted with effect from March 15. However, the decision to allow indoor dining will depend on the outcome of the review meeting to be held on March 10. The Election Commission of Pakistan has also been allowed to hold local bodies and cantonment board elections by the end of May or early June. The NCOC also increased the number of spectators attending Pakistan Super League (PSL) pool matches to

50pc from the present 20pc and permitted full attendance during play-offs with stringent standard operating procedures. However, the statement said the decisions could be reviewed in case infection rate rose again. The provinces, meanwhile, can enforce targeted NPIs where required depending on disease prevalence in a given area or sector. On the other hand, Pakistan saw another 1,196 people getting infected and 50 dying of COVID-19 in a single day. The worldwide cases, however, continued to fall for the sixth consecutive week. As many as 2.4 million new infections were reported globally which was an 11 per cent decline compared to the previous week. According to the NCOC data, out of the 50 deaths, 44 were reported in hospitals. A total of 241 ventilators were in use of COVID-19 patients across the country with the occupancy rate in Lahore being 37pc, Islamabad

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PMC to launch online system for medical students, practitioners

MN Report
ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) has recently planned to launch fully automated online application system in March allowing medical graduates and licensed practitioners to apply for licenses, renewals, and other services without visiting the commission office. According to an official of PMC, the services would also include the addition of qualifications online along with an online payment methodology without a visit to any PMC offices or banks. He said that the pre-existing database of licensed practitioners only had CNICs of less than 35 per cent licensed practitioners in their record. The council approved the launch, in March 2021, of the digital license profile project, allowing practitioners to create their digital profile online and, upon biometric verification, update their status and profile online with automated verification processes. He added the digital license profile would enable the commission to issue licenses to practitioners immediately and in a digital format. It would also secure a practitioner's data and identity as well as would enable a public mobile application for any person to verify the status of a medical practitioner. He said the commission also approved a policy allowing licensed doctors who were either not practicing

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Health Minister chairs meeting discussing communicable diseases

MN Report

KARACHI - Karachi Minister for Health and Population Welfare Sindh, Dr Azra Pechuho, chaired a meeting held on communicable diseases and the practices that would require funding. The meeting focused on the transmission of tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, as well as

infectious diseases have been set up throughout the province. These sites are connected to the districts' command and control centres that report to the DG Health offices of the district. Considering drugs and medicines being sold with counterfeit prescriptions, pharmacies will now be

individuals who do not have national identity cards, 4% of those who have been screened for communicable diseases are missing and have not been available for a follow-up screening.



hepatitis B. Also, a part of this meeting was Director General Health Services Sindh, Dr Irshad Memon, Deputy Director-General CDC, Dr Teerat Das, Senior Program Officer Global Fund, ADL Director CDC-II, Dr Saquib Ali Shiekh, Provincial Program Officer, Global Fund, Dr Srichand. It was decided that every new child being admitted to schools in Sindh would be screened for tuberculosis, and if they tested positive, they would also be screened for HIV/AIDS. This is done in order to curb the flow of communicable diseases across the province. Sentinel sites that are designed to be able to screen and detect 32 communicable and

systematised to report to Sindh Healthcare Commission and district health departments regarding where these prescriptions were obtained from. This measure will enable clinics and medical institutes to keep a record of the infections as well as those prescribing medications for them and will decrease instances of negligence and foul play. NGO's that work on communicable infectious diseases will also be required to work closely with the Government of Sindh to ensure and enable accountability and transparency. Due to there being a multitude of stakeholders combined with potentially infected

The Minister for Health and Population Welfare Sindh reiterated the importance of tracking all those who are missing after initial screenings as these individuals could be the reason for further drug resistance when it comes to TB and HIV/AIDS. In order to curb the infections in the province, pregnant women in Rato Dero and Larkana will be screened for HIV/AIDS as well as TB. Since cases of TB are being detected in demographics of children aged 0-4, a practice of reverse contact tracing will be used, which then screens the parents and grandparents of these children in order to pinpoint

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JPMC constitutes an inquiry committee

MN Report

KARACHI - The Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) has formed a four-member inquiry committee to probe the missing baby issue. 4-member inquiry committee comprises of Prof Dr Tariq Mehmood, Prof Haleema Yasmin, Dr Yaha Khan Tunio, and Ms Kulsum Akhtar. meeting of the inquiry committee was held at the committee room, administration block of this center, regarding the complaint lodged by Khalid ul Saba on 6 February.

The inquiry committee will probe the factual position of the complaint and will submit its report to the Executive Director, JPMC, immediately.



Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences meets President PMC

MN Report

ISLAMABAD - A delegation of basic medical sciences teachers met Dr Arshad Taqi, President Pakistan Medical Commission recently Lahore.



The delegation included Dr Hamid Javed Qureshi, Principal and Professor of Physiology, Akhtar Saeed Medical and Dental College (AMDC), Dr Laiq Hussain Siddiqui, Professor of Anatomy, AMDC, Dr Muhammad Saeed Anwar, Professor of Pharmacology, AMDC, Dr Naveed Ahmad Ansari, Professor of Pharmacology, Fatima Memorial Hospital College of Medicine and Dentistry (FMHCMD), Prof. Muhammad Ahmad Alamgir, Professor of Pharmacology, Rahbar Medical and Dental College.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the matters concerning the basic medical subjects and clearing the air about the degrees of these subjects

The president PMC listened to all the queries and responded regarding the apprehensions of the basic medical sciences community which have been created either due to circulation of false news or misinterpretation of certain facts. The president clearly told the participants that Master of Philosophy (M Phil) and Fellowship of College of Physicians and Surgeons (FCPS) in basic medical subjects are recognised by the PMC without any reservations.

Dr Arshad further said that people holding M.Phil. and FCPS degrees in basic medical sciences continue to be eligible to appoint as Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors. He further confirmed that the registration certificate issued by the PMC is actually a license to practice and, therefore, basic medical subjects degrees need not be recorded in this registration certificate. "These degrees have been awarded by the universities and other degree-awarding institutions recognised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and, therefore, do not need to be re- vetted by the PMC," Dr Arshad reassured. President PMC said that if some people still need a vetting certificate, incase of service abroad, the PMC will liaise with the HEC to make arrangements for the issuance of such a vetting certificate by the HEC upon the request of the person concerned.

It was further assured that the matter of induction of non-medical teachers holding a PhD degree into the faculty of medical colleges, strict rules will be framed by the PMC. Such step was given under consideration to pragmatic suggestions from the current medical faculty and to ensure that only those non-medical PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) holders could be eligible to become medical teachers who possess PhD degrees relating to human anatomy, human physiology, clinical pharmacology, and clinical pathology, etc. The PMC will fix a maximum limit on the non-medical teachers in every basic medical sciences subject/department, beyond which induction of non-MBBS teachers will not be allowed to any medical college or institution.

PMA lauds Federal Government for allowing companies to import COVID-19 vaccines

MN Report

KARACHI - The Pakistan Medical Association appreciated the Federal Government's decision to allow private companies to import the corona vaccine, but the decision of excluding the imported vaccines from the strict price cap regime that is typically applied to all drug sales within the country is not fair.

Secretary-General, Pakistan Medical Association (Centre), Dr S M Qaisar Sajjad, in his statement, said it would give a free hand to the companies to fix the vaccine prices of their own choice. Thus the vaccine prices will be higher. The PMA believes that the vaccine price matters should be dealt with as per the rules applied to all imported drugs, and no price cap exemption should be given to any imported corona vaccine. Dr Sajjad is also concerned about the supply chain of the vaccine. It should be strictly maintained according to the required standards so that its efficacy can be maintained. The vaccination drive for healthcare workers in

Pakistan, which started on 3rd February 2021, is moving very slowly because of confusion among healthcare workers.

The Government should start a massive campaign through the media to rule out all the vaccine's suspicions and fears.

Qaisar Sajjad said that the vaccine, which is presently being administered to healthcare workers, is not recommended for those who are older than 60 years. We request the Government to immediately import such vaccines, which can be administered to healthcare workers above sixty. We reiterate that at present, the vaccine should be administered to healthcare workers only because healthcare workers are dying every day due to the coronavirus. To date, 188 doctors and 30 paramedics have died due to this deadly

virus. He said that the PMA also believes that the people working at private health facilities and general

practitioners, who are running their own clinics, all are frontline soldiers, so they should also be vaccinated on a priority basis.

He said that the healthcare workers' registration helpline 1166 for vaccination is not functioning properly. We suggest that all provincial governments establish their own registration desks or helpline for healthcare workers in their respective provinces to make the process more effective and smoother.



Federal Secretary MoST visits ICCBS-University of Karachi

MN Report

KARACHI - The Federal Secretary Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), Dr Arshad Mahmood, recently visited the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi (UoK).



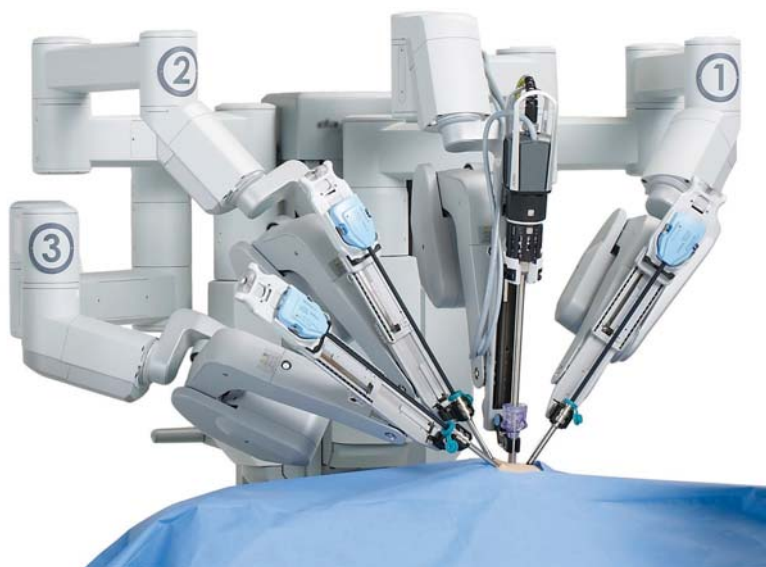
Prof Atta-ur-Rahman, ICCBS Patron-in-Chief and Chairman of Prime Minister's Task Force on Science and Technology, and Prof Dr Iqbal Choudhary, Director of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, welcomed the federal secretary at the ICCBS.

The spokesman of the ICCBS - University of Karachi said that Dr Arshad Mahmood paid an official two-day visit during which he had a meeting with Prof Atta-ur-Rahman and Prof Dr Iqbal Choudhary. In the meeting, Prof Iqbal Choudhary, who is also serving the COMSTECH as the Coordinator-General, gave a detailed presentation about the massive activities related to science and research being carried out at the International Center. The Secretary MoST assured of the full support from his ministry to this premier research institution of Pakistan. He also praised the industrial support and national services of the center.

Robotic Surgery machine and CT Scan lying non-functional at Qatar Hospital

MN Report

KARACHI - The advanced robotic surgery machine and CT scan machine of the Sindh Government Qatar Hospital, Orangi Town, Karachi, are lying idle due to a shortage of funds and resources. Pakistan's first advance robotic surgery machine was installed at the Operation Theater of the Sindh Government Qatar Hospital in 2011. Former Governor Sindh, Dr Ishrat-ul-Ebad Khan had inaugurated the robotic machine in October 2011. The costly robotic surgery machine has been lying as wastage in the hospital since 2014 as the hospital's administration has been unable to run the advanced facility due to a shortage of funds and resources. A senior official of the Qatar Hospital, Orangi Town, noted that some major advantages of the robotic surgery machine are precision, miniaturization, smaller



incisions, decreased blood loss, less pain, and quicker healing time. The hospital's administration had performed 70 successful surgeries from 2011 to 2014, but later surgeries using the robotic machine were stopped due to the

unavailability of funds. The hospital's management sent several requests to the high-ups of the Sindh Health Department for the release of funds to run the robotic machine permanently, but no positive response has been

received from the concerned authorities. He said that the cost per surgery is millions of rupees at private hospitals, while the Qatar Hospital performed all the surgeries free of cost before this machine developed a technical fault. Similarly, the CT scan machine of the Qatar Hospital has also been lying out of order for the past several months due to the sheer negligence of the Sindh Health Department. Poor patients are being referred to private labs for CT scans. Medical Superintendent, Sindh Government Qatar Hospital, Orangi Town, Dr Noushad Sheikh, said that the CT scan machine's cable burst during the Karachi rains, and efforts are underway to make the machine operational soon. He admitted that the robotic surgery machine had been non-functional since before his joining as MS.

Ziauddin University welcomes the 26th batch of MBBS

MN Report

KARACHI - "I can see these glowing faces with that spark in their eyes and intelligence in their minds, which will make our country's future bright. Congratulations to you all for choosing the Ziauddin University. Now you have to show your strength and work really hard to earn the degree and to make your parents proud," said Prof Dr Pirzada Qasim Raza Siddiqui, Vice-Chancellor, Ziauddin University, at the commencement day of class XXVI MBBS at the Ziauddin University.

While congratulating the new batch of MBBS, Dr Pirzada Qasim said that we welcome you into this vibrant learning environment. It is you who makes us what we are, and we look forward to the fresh ideas and energy you bring to our campus. I speak for the entire faculty, staff and student



community of the Ziauddin University in saying we are delighted you have chosen us as your second home. Welcoming the new batch of MBBS, Prof Abbas Zafar, Dean Faculty of Medicine, Ziauddin University, motivated and appreciated the students by

saying, "You have chosen to enter this profession and pursue your MBBS degree amid a global health crisis that has tested the resilience and strength of healthcare workers everywhere. In this decision, you have demonstrated not only your bravery but also your dedication to medicine."

In her welcome address Prof Dr Nuzhat Hassan, Principal, Ziauddin Medical College, Ziauddin University, congratulating the 26th Batch of MBBS, said, "I congratulate you on your admission to a prestigious institution. This year we are celebrating our Silver Jubilee, and we are proud of our alumni who are working in reputable institutions and hospitals, nationally and internationally. We are different from most colleges in Pakistan as we provide education focused on problem-based learning. We have a highly qualified faculty with 16 prestigious PhD faculty members. I hope you have a pleasant stay with us." Earlier, Syed Waqar Hussain Capt (Retd), Registrar, Ziauddin University, handed over the rule of 149 fresh students of Class XXVI MBBS in the discipline of medicine.

Ziauddin University introduces Pakistan's first-ever 3D Virtual Dissection Table

MN Report

KARACHI - The Department of Anatomy at the Ziauddin University has introduced Pakistan's first-ever 3D Virtual Dissection Table known as Anatomage. It's a powerful tool that is installed in its newly constructed Digital Anatomy Lab at the university.

Dr Asim Hussain, Chancellor, Ziauddin University, inaugurated the Anatomage Table and Digital Anatomy Lab, which enhances the educational standards and makes the Ziauddin University a technology leader not only in Pakistan but also in South Asia.

While addressing the top management of the Ziauddin University, Dr Asim Hussain said, "For the very first time in the history of Pakistan, the Ziauddin University introducing the 3D virtual dissection table which is being taken to all the campuses of the Ziauddin University and Hospitals to help students in getting the technology-based learning. MRI and CT scans can also be done with this virtual

dissection table. We are introducing new teaching and learning methods by using such useful machines and technology at the Ziauddin University."

The Anatomage Table is the most technologically advanced 3D anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tool and is being adopted by many of the world's leading medical schools and institutions. The Anatomage Table, combined with its renowned radiology software and clinical content, separates it from any other imaging system in the market.

It is the only fully segmented real human 3D anatomy system. Users can visualize anatomy exactly as they would on a freshly dead body. Individual structures are reconstructed in accurate 3D, resulting in an unprecedented level of real accurate anatomy, dissectible in 3D. The Table allows for exploration and learning of human anatomy beyond what any cadaver could offer.

The Anatomage Table based education is proven to be

effective. Growing publications show improved test scores, more efficient class lab sessions, and student acceptance. The Table allows students to interact with the young and well-preserved digital cadavers instead of aged and degenerated bodies. The accurate details and rich content draw students' interest and attention, leading to more effective educational outcomes.

Earlier, on the occasion of the inauguration ceremony, Dr Bushra Wasim Khan, Professor & HOD of Anatomy Department, Ziauddin University, in her welcome and introduction address, said, "This is the first time in the history of the Ziauddin University that we are introducing this 3D virtual dissection table which will be help full for all medical and dental students, labs, radiologists, nurses, surgeons, doctors and house officers. With this new technology finally, we can get rid of the typical dissection process in which we used to have direct exposure to dead human bodies."



Ziauddin University organises the virtual seminar 'Reality or myth of COVID-19 vaccine'

MN Report

KARACHI - "The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has approved three vaccines till now. The first is the Sinopharm vaccine; the second is the Oxford University research project - Astrazeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India. The third is the Sputnik-V, manufactured by the Russian State Institute.

We are currently using the Sinopharm vaccine. Soon, we will get the Astrazeneca and Russian Sputnik-V, vaccines. For the very first time in the history of Pakistan we have completed the phase three clinical trial of the Sinopharm vaccine based on 18,000 subjects," said Dr Obaidullah, Director, Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP).

He talked about the COVID-19 vaccine during the virtual seminar, titled "Reality or Myth of COVID-19 Vaccine" organized by Ziauddin University to raise awareness about the insight reality of COVID-19 vaccine.

While talking about the ingredients used in COVID-19 vaccine, he said, "In Pakistan, the vaccine we are using has an inactivated, dead COVID-19 particle which develops the immunity response. Lung damage and death rate can also be controlled after getting a vaccine shot. All Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE are using this. From the development

to the approval process of the vaccine, it has been completed during the ten months of the pandemic, which is the fastest development and clinical trial of any vaccine in the whole wide world."



Whilst answering a question about the ideal amount of a vaccine shot to prevent COVID-19, Dr Osama Rehman Khalid, Consultant, Infectious Disease, Dr Ziauddin Hospital, said, "The vaccine we are using in Pakistan have two shots to prevent, one from the beginning and the second shot after three weeks of the first shot. However, other countries of the world are using different kinds of vaccines, and each dose of the vaccine varies from vaccine to vaccine."

"Clinical trials of the vaccine were started in July 2020 and still going

on, nobody knows about the effectiveness of the vaccine and how long it will stay, so it is not the right time to take a risk for our lives by avoiding safety measurements. We cannot evade SOPs until 80-90% of the whole population gets

vaccinated," explained Dr Osama Rehman Khalid.

"The reasons for getting vaccinated are that it will stop the rapid spread of COVID-19 and, there are still some chances of a vaccinated person to catch COVID-19, but the vaccine will change the nature of COVID-19 as there would be no complications or death fear for the vaccinated COVID-19 patient. Also, it wouldn't be as severe as it were before the vaccine. Vaccines immunity decreases with time. Those who already suffer from COVID-19 are supposed to get vaccine shots two

weeks after getting a negative report from COVID-19," Dr Osama noted.

While answering the question about the age group recommendation for vaccines, he said, "The vaccine is highly recommended for the people above 18 years old. According to the vaccines' research trials, it has been tested successfully between the age group of 18 to 60. Whereas, the age group above 60 has been told to get vaccinated on their risk. As for now, the positive data of the following age group vaccine trial has not been found yet."

"Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are not recommended to get the vaccine shot because pregnant and breastfeeding mothers were not a part of the clinical trial of the COVID-19 vaccine. However, it varies from situation to situation as few females got pregnant after a few months of getting vaccinated, and we didn't get any reported problems in those pregnant women." He was talking about the safety of vaccines for pregnant women or a breastfeeding mother. Dr Bushra Jamil, President, the Medical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan, responded to a question about the side effects of vaccines said that there are minor side effects like

Continued on Page 08

CHK posts a focal person to motivate health workers for COVID vaccination

MN Report

KARACHI - The Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) has posted a focal person to convince and motive CHK employees to get the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination.

The CHK administration has deputed Dr Haresh Kumar to motive and facilitate CHK employees to get vaccinated at the Khaliq Dina Hall Centre Karachi. He has been directed to submit a report to the Secretary Health Sindh through the Medical Superintendent, CHK. While AMS Dr Raqib Tufail, AMS Dr Shafiq Pathan, and DMS Dr Shah Mohammad Shaikh, have also been nominated as co-coordinators to

vaccinate the CHK staff. The Additional Medical Superintendent, Nursing, Mrs Junejo, and Chief Nursing Superintendent, Madam Shakeela, will motive nurses to get vaccinated. Action will be taken against anyone who fails to get vaccinated.



Unpaid young doctors stage sit-in at KMC Head Office

MN Report

KARACHI - The young doctors of the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH) recently staged a protest demonstration and sit-in outside the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Office for the payment of their salaries and allowances.



The protesters were led by President YDA, ASH, Dr Faisal Javed, Senior Vice-President, Dr Farjad, Dr Yumna, Dr Osman, Dr Rida, and others. The protesting doctors staged a protest at the KMC administration office from 10:00 am and continued till 12:00 pm. The young doctors blocked the M A Jinnah Road for a while to press the KMC administration.

As a result, Senior Director Health, KMC, Financial Advisor, KMC, Afaq Ahmed, and Senior Director Finance, KMC, Riaz Khatri, met with the protesting doctors and requested the doctors to end their protest.

Later, the YDA ended their protest demonstration after assurance from senior officials of the KMC to resolve the issues in ten days. The Emergency Department, OPDs, and OTs remained operational during the young doctors' protest at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital as per schedule.

There are many concerns regarding online assessments: Vice Chancellor DUHS

MN Report

KARACHI - Vice-Chancellor, Dow University of Health Sciences, Prof Muhammad Saeed Quraishy, has said that the cases of the global epidemic COVID-19 are gradually decreasing.

and their parents were also present on occasion. Vice-Chancellor, Prof Muhammad Saeed Quraishy, said that last year there were problems not only for students and teachers but also for the university as well. Now we are

decisions for the future, and future success will depend on the best decisions you make for yourself. He urged students to study hard and diligently and participate in sports activities for physical and mental harmony. Prof Zarnaz



COVID-19 had put educational activities at stake, but now the students have started moving towards a brighter future, and new horizons of success are waiting for them. He said this in the open day ceremony of new students of the Dow International Medical College and Dow Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Ojha campus held separately. DUHS Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kartar Dawani, Professor Zarnaz Wahid, Dr Naheed, Dr Ramla Naz, Dr Sanam Somroo, Dr Tayaba Nasreen, Medical Superintendent, Dow University Hospital, Professor Zahid Azam, Professor Ateeq ur Rehman, teachers, students,

done with the second wave of COVID-19. However, the series of online teaching training will continue in the future. He said that due to the global pandemic, the whole world systems were upset. Online teaching was introduced to save it, but there were difficulties in online assessments, and serious objections were also raised against it. Therefore, physical classes for students will continue from now onwards. While addressing the students, he said that you had started the journey of professional medical education. Up till now, you have to look to your parents, teachers and others for your decisions, but now you have to make your own

Wahid took an oath from the new students and highlighted the importance of medical education. Addressing the open day of the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Prof Muhammad Saeed Quraishy welcomed the new students and said that our institute has been functioning since 2007, independently as per the Government of Sindh's notification. You will enjoy learning with experienced teachers and training instruments at the Ojha campus, and you will learn a lot in the next five years. He hoped that the students would be able to pursue their studies without any hesitation or hindrance regularly.

JSMU welcomes a new batch of MBBS

MN Report

KARACHI - The Jinnah Sindh Medical University's Sindh Medical College (SMC-JSMU) welcomed its MBBS batch of 2020-21 with an orientation ceremony on February 18th, 2021.



This is the first batch of MBBS to join the JSMU after the COVID-19 outbreak, and it includes 327 students. The Orientation Ceremony began with the Tilawat-e-Quran and National Anthem, followed by a warm welcome from the Dean and Principal SMC-JSMU, Prof Ghulam Sarwar Qureshi. Dr Azam Khan, Registrar, JSMU, administered the oath to the new entrants, instilling a sense of duty and allegiance to the noble profession of medicine. He thanked the Founding Vice-Chancellor, Professor S M Tariq Rafi, the JSMU-Alumni Association of North America, and the Sindh Government's support in the progress the JSMU has made over the past few years.

Welcoming the students, Vice-Chancellor, Prof S M Tariq Rafi, said, 'The commencement day is an important milestone in any medical student's career, affirming their acceptance into the medical professional fraternity. Students should immerse themselves in their careers and follow the journey of becoming a doctor with unwavering passion.' He noted that girls had outnumbered the boys in attaining admissions at the JSMU consistently. He also described how the JSMU had eliminated cheating by using online examinations.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shahid Rasul, welcomed the students and

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Anti-quackery teams seal 47 clinics

MN Report

KARACHI - The Directorate of Anti-Quackery Sindh Healthcare Commission (SHCC) teams visited 183 clinics in a week and sealed 47 clinics run by quacks in different cities of Sindh. The anti-quackery teams paid visits to Karachi West, Korangi, Karachi Central, Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Noshero Feroze, Tando Allahyar, Badin, Jamshoro, Umerkot, Shikarpur, and Kashmore. The teams sealed 47 clinics run by quacks. The SHCC has sealed a total of 4,421 healthcare establishments (HCEs) across the Sindh province. The Directorate of Clinical Governance and Training has conducted training programs on the Sindh Service Delivery

Standards for hospitals in the Karachi Division. Thirty-three representatives from 29 hospitals attended the event. Additionally, 32 Hakeems received training on the Minimum Service Delivery Standards for Tibbe e Unani. Printed material on COVID-19 and injection safety protocols were distributed, and the disposal of infectious waste was also emphasized. In another training, 37 general practitioners from district East and South were given training on the Sindh Service Delivery Standards (SSDS). The Directorate of Complaints, SHCC,

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Pakistani stem cell researchers to grow mini-intestines in a unique study into malnutrition

MN Report

KARACHI - Karachi Researchers at the Aga Khan University are harnessing the power of stem cells to create mini-intestines that can generate new insights into how malnutrition occurs. Malnutrition is a major public health problem in the

The Aga Khan University's Juma research laboratory is one of the few facilities in South Asia and is among a select few in the world that have succeeded in growing enteroids or mini-intestines from gut biopsy tissue. "Stem cell technology has enabled us to successfully

the gut. This means that the coronavirus also infects and grows inside our gut, which could explain COVID-19 symptoms such as an upset stomach and fatigue. The study will see researchers expose a range of gut enteroids to the virus to explore how COVID-19



developing world, with four out of ten children under the age of five in Pakistan suffering from stunting while one in three children is underweight, according to the National Nutrition Survey 2018. An unhygienic environment, contaminated water, inadequate diet and poor maternal health during pregnancy are some of the major factors leading to environmental enteropathy or EE. EE is an important but poorly understood intermediary condition, which is characterised by inflammation of the gut, that leads to chronic malnutrition. Existing research into malnutrition has extensively documented its causes and shed light on the structural and genetic differences between a healthy and a malnourished intestine. However, until now, researchers have been unable to explore how EE originates at the cell level because of a range of ethical limitations and practical obstacles, especially in young children. Therefore, studies into the genesis of EE requires to require models of healthy and malnourished guts to be developed to explore disease processes.

grow intestinal organoids, or mini-intestines, from the tissue of malnourished children," said AKU's Dr Junaid Iqbal. "This provides us with an excellent model to safely conduct experiments to explore disease processes, study gut infections and vaccine failure in malnourished children, and identify different therapeutic strategies to reverse the effects of environmental enteropathy. This may increase the chances of healthy growth in our children." Dr Iqbal and his team member AKU Assistant Professor Dr Zehra Jamil have received training on going these enteroids from one of the world's leading laboratories at the University of Virginia. In an extension of their work on malnutrition, the AKU faculty, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Virginia, will study the effects of COVID-19 infection on a malnourished gut, one of the first such studies in the world. Recent studies into the coronavirus have noted that the ACE-2 receptor, a protein that provides a pathway for the virus into the body's cells, is present in both the respiratory system as well as

multiplies in the intestine. They will also conduct studies to understand infection dynamics in young versus old people and to judge how well-malnourished guts can defend against the virus. "Malnutrition is a major issue that limits children's growth, cognitive potential, and overall immune response," said Dr Iqbal. "Since it's so prevalent in the developing world, it is possible that it plays a role in the pathogenesis and spread of COVID-19 across Pakistan and other countries in the South Asian region. COVID-19 in the presence of malnutrition may further deteriorate children's development in our part of the world. That's why this study is so important." The study has received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Its goals are in line with targets under goal 2 of the global Sustainable Development Goals: end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, which calls for special efforts to end all forms of malnutrition and stunting in children under the age of five by 2030.

KU and Dr Essa Lab sign MoU for student support and scientific research

MN Report

KARACHI - The Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization, University of Karachi, and Dr Essa Laboratory and Diagnostic Centre signed a Memorandum of Understanding for student support and scientific and research cooperation.



The KU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, and the Director Dr Essa Laboratories and Diagnostic Centre, Dr Farhan Essa, inked the MoU documents while the signing ceremony was held at the VC Secretariat.

According to the MoU, students who would initiate health start-up ideas would be supported and educated on starting and growing their business. This MoU would also provide them with a chance to work to diagnose epidemics and other diseases.

As per the MoU, the KU and Dr Essa Lab have also agreed to work on the development, education, training, dissemination of knowledge, and growth of problem-solving capacities among students.

Both parties have agreed to initiate advising and facilitating drug research, joint research projects, industry visits, student job support, internship to students, student scholarships, special lectures, and training sessions by Dr Essa Lab experts and faculty members of the varsity, joint seminars, and conference.

On this occasion, the KU VC Professor, Dr Khalid Iraqi, mentioned that at present, the collaboration with the corporate sector is essential for universities and in this regard, the KU ORIC is constantly engaged with industries and other corporate sectors. He said that the University of Karachi strives to provide the best possible facilities to its students and at the same time provides internship opportunities to the students in various industries and corporate sectors so that they do not face any difficulty in getting employment in the future.

Dr Farhan Essa observed that students and faculty members would have the opportunity to jointly conduct the research projects, which would help us create awareness among the masses.

NCOC relaxes COVID ...*Continued from front page*

33pc, Multan 27pc and Peshawar 21pc.

Data of oxygenated beds showed that 61pc were occupied in Gujrat, 35pc in Peshawar, 25pc in Lahore and 23pc in Mirpur.

The number of total active cases, which was over 50,000 in December, has dropped to 23,665 as of Feb 24.

The data further said that so far 574,580 people had been detected having the virus in Pakistan out of whom 538,207 had recovered and 12,708 lost their lives. As many as 2,084 patients were under treatment across the country recently.

PMC to launch online ...*Continued from front page*

or were based outside Pakistan to simply notify the commission of their non-practicing status in Pakistan to stop the renewal and any other charges being levied on their licenses.

The commission approved the decisions of the disciplinary committee which entail imposing penalties including heavy fines for medical and dental practitioners working without a valid license, as well as suspending and cancelling licenses on account of negligence and placing privileges under review. The regulations provided for the disciplinary adjudication by the PMC Disciplinary Committee of complaints of negligence, harassment and other violations of the code of ethics by licensed practitioners.

Major and minor penalties defined including cancellation and suspension of licenses and

imposition of fines with the first-time inclusion of a penalty requiring a practitioner to do free-of-cost service in the public sector and low-income regions.

The council has taken notice of a group of foreign students who had graduated before the assessment of foreign colleges and post assessment their colleges were placed in List B requiring them to return to the country they graduated to obtain a license.

He said in this regard a special one-time pathway has been approved for these graduates to replace the requirement for a foreign license with license eligibility enabling them to start their house jobs in Pakistan. As per policy about the one-time licensing pathway for students who had graduated prior to January 2021 from a foreign college contained in List B, students would be processed for licensing with requirements included they would be required to show license eligibility in the country from where they graduated if they have not acquired a license from such country, they qualify the NLE, upon the qualification of NLE, they would be granted Provisional License, they would be required to then complete a house job in Pakistan while upon completion of the house job, they would be granted a full license.

The council made it clear that all persons having graduated from a List B college and who have been granted provisional licenses earlier based on the Green List would be required to appear in the first NLE and qualify the same to retain the validity of their provisional license. If such person fails to qualify for the

first NLE, the provisional license would be suspended till such time as they qualify for the NLE. Similarly, if any person who falls in such category and a graduate from their college was granted a provisional license on the basis of the Green List previously would be granted a provisional license to start, he added.

Health Minister chairs meeting ...*Continued from page 02*

the location of infection spread. In instances where individuals are unable to pay for their registration for screenings, this amount will be paid for them in order to ensure registration.

The meeting culminated with a focus on counselling mothers, religious clergy and community elders in order to sensitise the community to HIV/AIDS in order to remove the stigma and facilitate treatment.

Ziauddin University organises ...*Continued from page 05*

local pain, fever, and eyesight effect which is typical of any vaccine. No major reported side effects for this vaccine have been observed.

"People need to clear this misconception that vaccines will change their DNA. No, it will not. There are no chances of getting infected. It's a regular viral infection so it does not affect the immune system in any way which would predispose to the development of any infection," she added. While motivating the public for vaccination, Dr Nida Hussain, Pro-Chancellor, Ziauddin University, said, "We need to motivate the public to go and get their vaccine

shot as it's not harmful, it doesn't have any major side effects, and it is for your safety and your loved one's safety. Those who are afraid of the vaccine and have some misconception regarding the vaccine should keep in mind that this vaccine we are using in Pakistan has been through strict clinical trials and succeeded for masses."

JSMU welcomes a new ...*Continued from page 06*

described the experience of entering a medical college as a life-changing event requiring hard work and full commitment.

Prof Dr Lubna Baig, Chairperson, APPNA Institute of Public Health-JSMU, gave a thought-provoking presentation on professionalism to the new students.

The new inductees were briefed by all the Heads of Departments at SMC-JSMU, Chairperson, Community Medicine, Prof Ghazala Usman, informed the students about the Students Council, which looks after co-curricular activities. Students learned about the course curriculum, rules, and other procedural information during the orientation. Faculty members and staff from various institutes also attended the ceremony.

In the end, Assistant Registrar, Dr Anum Pario, presented a vote of thanks to the ceremony's attendees. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Syed Muhammad Tariq Rafi, and the JSMU directors, faculty, and staff of various institutions reminded the students to follow the prescribed COVID-19 SOPs and wished the students a pleasant future in the years to come.

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Grand Health Alliance threatens Sindh-wide strike from 15th February

MN Report

KARACHI - The Grand Health Alliance (GHA) has announced a complete strike from Karachi to Kashmore on 15 February 2021 against the non-implementation of the promises made with healthcare workers.

doctors, paramedical staff, and nurses under the banner of the Grand Health Alliance will stage a protest and sit-in outside the Karachi Press Club on 15th February, and the protest will continue until the acceptance of their demands.

Central Leader of the GHA, Aijaz Ali Kaleri, said that the Sindh government has failed to implement on the provision of a high-risk allowance on a regular basis, enforcement of the four-tier formula for nurses, the deputation of doctors, a health professional allowance, and a time-scale for paramedical staff.

He further informed that the Sindh Health Department's concerned authorities seem uninterested in resolving the genuine issues of healthcare professionals. He said that the officials have been using delaying tactics and have compelled the frontline healthcare workers to go on strike again.



NICVD Healthcare Network wins 10 awards for Corporate Social Responsibility 2021

MN Report

KARACHI - It is a great honour for the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases-NICVD to be bestowed with 10 awards at the 10th Annual Corporate Social Responsibility summit and Awards-2021 for serving the people of Pakistan, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion and without any discrimination, totally free of cost.

This success is a result of the visionary leadership of the Executive Director of the NICVD and outstanding efforts of the Management Consultant of the NICVD,

who always think about patients and strives to provide state-of-the-art heart healthcare services to the patients at their doorstep free of cost, yet another achievement of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD).

The credit goes to Professor Nadeem Qamar, Mr Hyder Awan and Ms Azra Maqsood for their progressive and forward vision in transforming the NICVD into one of the world's best cardiac hospitals.

The management congratulated the team of the NICVD on this

praiseworthy achievement, saying that it was their vision to establish a network of the world's best heart healthcare facilities throughout the province so that everyone could avail free cardiac services at their doorstep.

They further added that in a short span of 4 years, the NICVD had established 10 full-fledged hospitals and 19 Chest Pain Units across the Sindh Province. The NICVD hospitals' network and the Chest Pain Units have been providing prompt and easily accessible cardiac services to the people of Pakistan, totally free of cost.

Anti-quackery teams ...

Continued from page 06

established complaint desks at the Altibri Hospital Memon Goth. The team visited the Altibri Hospital, Homecare Nursing, for inspection against the complaint received. The Directorate of Licensing and Accreditation has collected data of 310 hospitals in Sindh for healthcare workers, technical and non-technical staff for the registration of COVID-19 vaccination in reference to the National Command Operation Center (NCOC) directives.

Sindh registers 114,225 ...

Continued from page 12

were common in the rural areas of Sindh province compared to the urban areas; dengue cases were generally reported from the urban areas. In Sindh, more than 1200 malaria diagnostic and treatment centres are operating all over the province. In 2019, the Malaria Control Program Sindh recorded 146,470 malaria positive cases in the province.

Pharma firm fined Rs150m ...

Continued from page 12

discharge the onus of making due and sufficient disclosures of such material change in the character of the product," the inquiry committee had stated. The CCP bench gave 40 days to the respondent, starting from the date of the order, for compliance with its directives.

FDA approves Johnson & ...

Continued from page 12

by the end of March, which along with the more than 220 million total doses expected from Pfizer and Moderna would be enough to fully vaccinate 130 million Americans.

So far, the United States has distributed more than 90 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, some of which have been used for second shots. About 14% of Americans have received at least one dose, according to U.S. government data.

Vials of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine candidate

are seen in an undated photograph. Johnson & Johnson/Handout via REUTERS. COVID-19 has claimed more than half a million lives in the United States, and states are clamoring for more doses to stem cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Public health officials have warned about a rise in the prevalence of more contagious variants of the virus, adding to the urgency to get millions more people vaccinated as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, they said, mask wearing and other measures to curb the virus spread should remain in place as recent declines in COVID-19 cases appear to be leveling off. The J&J vaccine is also under review by the European Union, where deliveries are expected starting in April and would build on the region's thin supplies of the Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca Plc shots.

In South Africa, regulators were awaiting the FDA decision as their government looks to deploy more J&J vaccine against a variant of the virus called B.1.351 that is

able to evade some vaccine protection.

J&J's vaccine is being rolled out there prior to official authorization for about 500,000 healthcare workers in a bid to stem infections from the variant, which has swept across the country and spread globally, including to the United States.

The vaccine is one of the few that has been tested in clinical trials against the variant and had a 64% efficacy rate at preventing moderate-to-severe disease in South Africa.

J&J said on Friday that the company was developing a second-generation vaccine that would target the concerning South African variant, and it will be ready to start Phase I trials by this summer.

J&J's vaccine uses a common cold virus known as adenovirus type 26 to introduce coronavirus proteins into cells in the body and trigger an immune response. J&J is testing a two-dose version of its vaccine, with results expected this summer.

PRCS convenes a coordination meeting on ‘Urban resilience to strengthening emergency response’

MN Report

KARACHI - The Sindh branch of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) recently organized a coordination meeting on urban resilience at the Emergency Operation Centre of PRCS-Sindh, Hilal-e-Ahmer House, Karachi.

All the relevant stakeholders and humanitarian organizations participated in the meeting with the aim of building working relationships to enhance the capacities of the Emergency Response Force (ERF) and strengthen the mechanism of emergency response in the city.

The event was presided



by the Chairman PRCS-Sindh, Shahnaz S Hamid, and attended by the representatives of the Edhi

Welfare Organization, the Chhipa Welfare Association, the Saylani Welfare Trust, the Aman

Foundation, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), the Institute of Oceanography Pakistan, the Pakistan Boy Scouts Association, the Federal and Sindh Civil Defense Training School, the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the Social Welfare Sindh, the Fire Protection Association of Pakistan (FPAP), the 1299 Rescue Service, the KMC Fire Department and the Office of Commissioner Karachi.

Chairman Mrs Shahnaz said that the PRCS is a statutory body established under an act of parliament, works throughout the country as an auxiliary to a government organization. "It is a leading humanitarian organization that offers its services as per its mandate for alleviating sufferings of the most vulnerable affected by natural or man-made disasters," she stated. The Chairman further said that preparing communities to cope with disasters to reduce the risks & hazards and build the capacities of youth during peacetime are integral parts of the PRCS intervention. "The PRCS-Sindh has established an Emergency Response Force (ERF) in the province especially responds in urban disasters and emergencies with trained volunteer's network in Karachi and

other cities," said the Chairman. She further said that all welfare organizations, government departments, rescue and response agencies in Karachi must work together to deal with disasters and provide more effective assistance to those affected. Honorary General Secretary, Tariq Moen, welcomed all participants and said that this meeting primarily aims to increase interaction between emergency response organizations and concerned government departments for future collaboration. Provincial Secretary, Kanwar Waseem, said that the PRCS-Sindh is working with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) for more than a decade on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Projects. The IFRC has vast experience in serving the most vulnerable people and has made valuable efforts in recent years to support the development of more resilient communities in urban areas worldwide. The Urban Resilience Hub at IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office has initiated a pilot project in Karachi to establish a coordination network with relevant stakeholders/Humanitarian actors, including government, civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs/INGOs, institutional donors, think tanks, and networks working on Emergency Response in Karachi. The Provincial Secretary also announced that PRCS-Sindh is going to launch a mobile application on the Disaster Management System to establish a nexus among all stakeholders in case of emergency and to disseminate information about the incident. Stakeholders also appreciated the initiative of the PRCS and vowed to assist in any way that they could and will work together.

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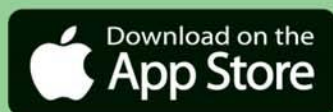
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Pharma firm fined Rs150m for 'deceptive' marketing

MN Report
ISLAMABAD - The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) recently imposed a Rs150 million penalty on a pharmaceutical company for deceptive marketing and misleading advertising of one of its products.

The order, passed by a CCP bench comprising chairperson Rahat Kaunain Hassan and member Bushra Naz Malik, said that marketing claims by the pharmaceutical firm can potentially deceive consumers with respect to the characteristics, formulation and intended use of tablet Strepsils.

The commission said that the company's marketing had deceived the general public into perceiving that Strepsils was still a medicated sore throat remedy.

The CCP's inquiry concluded that the marketing campaign

of the respondent appears to be deceptive in terms of Section 10 of the Competition Act in general, which prohibits distribution of false and misleading information to consumers.

The issue was brought to the CCP's notice by M/s Square Distribution & Marketing System (Pvt) Limited through a formal complaint alleging that M/s Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan Limited had been disseminating misleading information to the consumers by creating an impression that its product Strepsils was a drug for sore throat and cough.

The complaint pointed out that Strepsils was de-registered as a drug when acquired by Reckitt from Boots in 2005, and then re-launched with the disclaimer, "Non-medicated Lozenges".

"However, the company made no effort to educate and inform the consumers regarding the



discontinuation of medicinal ingredient in it," the complaint added. "The misleading campaign was also capable of harming the business interests of other undertakings."

The CCP inquiry committee noted that efforts made by the company to inform the general public about change in the formula of Strepsils were inadequate.

"Barely printing 'Non-Medicated Lozenges' on the product box and that too in a very small font does not

Continued on Page 09

Sindh registers 114,225 malaria cases

MN Report
KARACHI - The Vector-Borne Diseases Department of the Directorate General Health Services, Sindh, has registered 114,225 cases across the Sindh province in 2020, while no malaria-related death was reported in the province.

According to the statistics shared by the Sindh Health Department, a total of 114,225 malaria cases recorded throughout the province last year. The most of cases were reported in Umerkot (14,580), Thatta (13,284), Badin (12,620), Tharparkar (11,308), Larkana (10,902), Tando Muhammad Khan (9,814), and Mirpurkhas (7,116).

Similarly, more than 1,032 malaria cases were reported in Karachi in 2020 at the microscopic centres working in the city to treat malaria patients. The number of malaria cases was low in Karachi, Hyderabad, and other urban cities compared to the rural areas of the province.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease, and its outbreak took place after the monsoon rains, due to which thousands of people fell sick in all of Sindh. The malaria cases

Continued on Page 09



MN Report
NEW YORK - The U.S. government on 28th Feb authorized Johnson & Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine, enabling millions more Americans to be vaccinated in the coming weeks and setting the vaccine up for additional approvals around the world.

The J&J vaccine is the third authorized in the United States, following ones from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, both of which require two doses.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced the emergency use authorization of the J&J vaccine for adults aged 18 and older following Friday's unanimous endorsement by the agency's panel of outside experts. Shipments to vaccination sites are expected to begin Sunday or Monday.

President Joe Biden hailed the move but cautioned Americans against celebrating too soon. "Things are still likely to get worse again as new variants spread," he said in a statement, urging people to continue washing their hands, wearing masks, and maintaining social distancing.

"There is light at the end of the tunnel, but we cannot let our guard down now or assume that victory is inevitable," he said.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which are based on new messenger RNA technology, showed higher efficacy rates in pivotal trials that used two doses versus J&J's single-shot vaccine. Direct comparison, however, is difficult because the trials had different goals and J&J's was conducted while more contagious new variants of the virus were circulating.

FDA approves Johnson & Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine



"We believe that people should take the vaccine they are able to access," the FDA's acting commissioner, Dr. Janet Woodcock, said in a call after the authorization, noting the three vaccines had not been studied head-to-head.

"We feel that each of these vaccines will be effective, will prevent hospitalization, deaths and should be used," she said.

In J&J's 44,000-person global trial, the vaccine was found to be 66% effective at preventing moderate-to-severe COVID-19 four weeks after inoculation. It was 100% effective in preventing hospitalization and death due to the virus.

There were very few serious side effects

reported in the trial, which also offered preliminary evidence that the vaccine reduced asymptomatic infections.

More study is expected. The FDA on Saturday dismissed the idea that evidence proved the vaccine prevented transmission between people and added there was no data to determine how long the vaccine's protection lasted.

J&J's vaccine is expected to be used widely around the globe because it can be shipped and stored at normal refrigerator temperatures, making distribution easier than for the Pfizer/BioNTech SE and Moderna vaccines, which must be shipped frozen.

"It potentially could play a very substantial role if we have enough doses because it's only a single-dose vaccine and that will make it attractive to people who are difficult to reach," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. "It's one and done."

The U.S. government, which has purchased 100 million doses of the J&J vaccine, plans to distribute about 3 million to 4 million next week. That would be on top of the around 16 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines the government already planned to ship across the country.

"We are ready to roll it out," White House senior adviser Andy Slavitt wrote on Twitter after the authorization. Johnson & Johnson said it had begun shipping vaccines to the government.

J&J plans to provide a total of 20 million doses

Continued on Page 09