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London, February 15 (RHC)-- The University of Oxford has launched a study to assess the safety and immune response of the COVID-19 vaccine it has developed with AstraZeneca in children for the first

time. The new mid-stage trial will determine whether the vaccine is effective for people between the ages of six and 17, according to a statement from the university issued over the weekend.

About 300 volunteers will be enrolled and first inoculations are expected this month, Oxford said. Up to 240 subjects will receive the vaccine, while the rest will receive a control drug.

Andrew Pollard, professor of paediatric infection and immunity and chief investigator on the Oxford vaccine trial, said: "While most children are relatively unaffected by coronavirus and are unlikely to become unwell with the infection, it is important to establish the safety and immune response to the vaccine in children and young people as some children may benefit from vaccination."

The two-dose Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has been hailed as a "vaccine for the world" because it is cheaper and easier to distribute than some rivals. AstraZeneca has a target to produce three billion doses this year and aims to produce more than 200 million doses per month by April.

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