

WHO urges continued use of AstraZeneca vaccine



Geneva, March 16 (RHC)-- Germany, France, Italy and Spain have suspended use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine over concerns about reports of blood clots in people who've received it. They follow

Denmark, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Venezuela in suspending AstraZeneca shots.

The vaccine has been administered to millions of people around the world and is a major part of the U.N.'s COVAX initiative to bring mass vaccination to lower-income countries.

A small number of recipients developed blood clots after at least one dose — and one person died of clotting — but the World Health Organization cautions there's no evidence AstraZeneca's vaccine caused the adverse outcomes.

WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan told reporters: "Two-point-six million people have died. At least 2.6 million people have died of COVID-19 disease. And so far, of the 300 million doses that have been given to people across the world, of course, using different vaccines, there is no documented death that's been linked to a COVID vaccine. So I think that while we need to continue to be very closely monitoring this, we do not want people to panic."

Many European nations have suspended AstraZeneca vaccinations just as COVID-19 cases surge across the continent. Italy has imposed another national lockdown, and

France is considering tough new measures after hospitalizations reached their highest levels since November.

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