

UK doctors seek urgent review of gap between COVID vaccine doses

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Some 5.5 million people have been given a first vaccine dose in the UK. (Photo: Reuters)

London, January 25 (RHC)-- A major British doctors' group says the United Kingdom should "urgently review" its decision to give people a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine up to 12 weeks after the first, rather than the shorter gap recommended by the manufacturer and the World Health Organization.

The UK, which has Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreak, adopted the policy in order to give as many people as possible the first dose of vaccine quickly. So far almost 5.5 million people have received a shot of either a vaccine made by United States drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech or one developed by UK-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

AstraZeneca has said it believes the first dose of its vaccine offers protection after 12 weeks, but Pfizer says it has not tested the efficacy of its jab after such a long gap. The British Medical Association (BMA) on Saturday urged England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty to "urgently review the UK's current position of second doses after 12 weeks".

In a statement, the BMA said there was "growing concern from the medical profession regarding the delay of the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as Britain's strategy has become increasingly isolated from many other countries." "No other nation has adopted the UK's approach," Chaand Nagpaul, chairman of the BMA council, told the BBC. He said the WHO had recommended that the second Pfizer vaccine shot could be given up to six weeks after the first but only "in exceptional circumstances."

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