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# Lonza to make coronavirus vaccine in Portsmouth

By Paul Briand

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PORTSMOUTH – The Lonza Biologics facility at Pease International Tradeport is part of a collaborative effort to manufacture a vaccine against the COVID-19 infection.

Work at the Portsmouth facility is expected to ramp up in June as biologics for the vaccine are transferred to the plant, according to the company.

“Lonza anticipates there will be a need to create new roles to manage the additional manufacturing requirements. As this manufacturing platform is extremely efficient, a large number of doses can be produced from a relatively small manufacturing footprint and number of staff,” said Victoria Morgan, head of corporate communications for the Swiss company.

Moderna, a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based biotechnology company, on Friday announced it is manufacturing a potential COVID-19 vaccine – called mRNA-1273 – in cooperation with Lonza.

The vaccine is not yet approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Having done phase 1 trials in March, the company on April 27 submitted application to the FDA to begin phase 2 trails, with phase 3 trials beginning as soon as fall 2020.

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According to a joint statement from the companies, the technology transfer is expected to begin in June, and the companies intend to make the first batches of mRNA-1273 at the Lonza facility at Pease in July. Over time, the parties say they intend to establish additional production sites across Lonza's worldwide facilities, ultimately allowing for the manufacture of material equivalent to up to 1 billion doses of mRNA-1273 per year for use worldwide.

"We are fully committed to leveraging our global network and experience in manufacturing technologies to support Moderna's manufacture of mRNA-1273 as well as collaborating on future Moderna products," said Albert M. Baehny, chairman and interim CEO, Lonza Group AG.

Moderna announced last month it had received a \$483 million contract from the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority to accelerate the development of its vaccine candidate.

"If you can only make a few million vials, it's not going to be really helping the global public health issue we have," Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel told CNBC earlier today. "Our goal is to make the vaccine available around the world."

"We are hoping with Lonza to start making product for the corona vaccine as early as July," he said. "Our team is ready to start dosing as soon as we get the green light."

Moderna, Lonza and other companies worldwide are racing to develop, test and prove through clinical trials a vaccine to protect people from the highly contagious and potentially deadly COVID-19 virus.

There are at least 70 coronavirus vaccines in development by drugmakers and research groups across the world, according to the World Health Organization.

The UK-based global biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca this week announced it agreed to manufacture and distribute a coronavirus vaccine being developed by the University of Oxford, should it prove effective. Oxford researchers are now testing their vaccine in 1,000 patients and plan to move to stage two and three clinical trials next month involving around 5,000 more people.

The researchers have said they could have several million doses of the vaccine produced and approved by regulators as early as September with broader numbers to follow.

At a press conference Friday afternoon, Gov. Chris Sununu said life in the state might not fully return to normal until there is a vaccine and he lauded the part Lonza is playing in the race to create one.

“It looks like Lonza, right here in New Hampshire, (has) a partnership with a group that is right on the cutting edge of a vaccine and that’s very exciting,” Sununu said. “I spoke to some of the folks higher up in Lonza and I said whatever they need financially, regulatorily, whatever doors we can open, we’re just very proud of an organization like that in our state that is trying their best, putting everything they’ve got behind a potential vaccine. But that could be months away, it could be years away, you just don’t know unfortunately.”

As of Friday morning, more than 3.3 million cases of COVID-19 were reported worldwide, with deaths numbering almost 250,000.

In New Hampshire, as of Friday afternoon, 81 people had died from the virus with infections numbering 2,310.

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