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Ex-Hilleman CEO On COVID-19 Vaccine Heterologous Boosting, Endemic Disease

Regulators Face Tough Time

by Vibha Ravi

As more countries adopt heterologous boosting of COVID-19 vaccines in a bid to improve supplies and/or immunity while reducing side effects, vaccines expert and ex-Hilleman CEO Davinder Gill talks to *Scrip* in an audio interview on the challenges of the strategy and of the disease becoming endemic.

With multiple waves of COVID-19 still hitting countries across the world, a number have looked at strategies to counter the disease's impact on their populations.

Some like the US and UK, which have companies such as *AstraZeneca PLC*, *Pfizer Inc.*, *Moderna, Inc.* and *Janssen Pharmaceutical Cos.* prioritizing supplies to them, decided on vaccinating their own citizens before helping others.

Others like Canada, Germany, Spain and South Korea went for a heterologous prime boosting strategy, not just to counter a short supply but also to boost immunity, as shown in some studies. Apart from delivering better protection against variants like Delta, avoiding a repeat of rare or very rare adverse events post administration of the first dose was also a driving factor of this "mix and match" strategy, as some COVID-19 vaccines reported greater or broader side effects than others.

Scientific data on COVID-19 vaccines and the mixing strategy are still evolving, with regulators revising their own recommendations while directing companies to update information available to vaccine recipients.

As heterologous boosting becomes more prevalent, *Scrip* interviewed Davinder Gill, a vaccine

expert and ex-CEO of India's *Hilleman Laboratories Pvt. Ltd.*, on the topic, as well as on challenges facing regulators, governments and companies as COVID-19 becomes endemic. The discussion also encompassed the state of play around COVID-19 vaccines in India.

Time Stamps

00:08 Introduction

01:41 Does heterologous boosting complicate a regulator's job in assigning responsibility for side effects?

02:50 How will Phase IV or post-marketing studies be conducted for heterologous boosting?

04:18 How will the Indian regulator track over six vaccines for these purposes?

06:14 Indemnity for Pfizer, Moderna, J&J over use of their COVID-19 vaccines in India

08:35 Has India got its timing right for resumption of COVID-19 vaccine exports?

10:30 Does the Serum and Biocon Biologics combination create a globally formidable force?

12:52 Challenges for regulators, companies and governments as the disease becomes endemic

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