Facebook Bans Ads Questioning Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines

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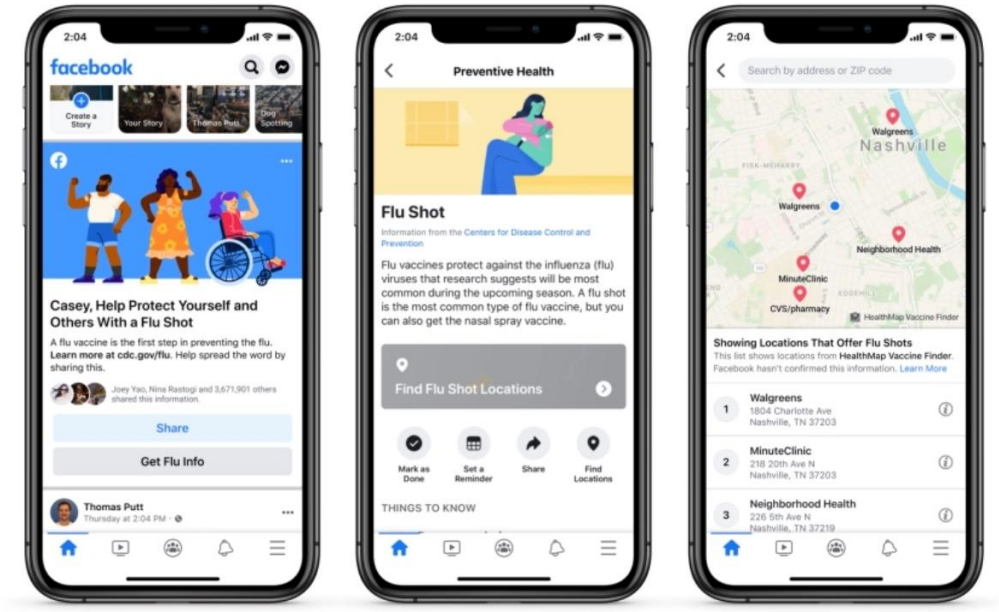
Mark Zuckerberg *has clearly had enough of being hauled in front of Congress and hectored by a gang of senior citizens and listening to the head of the ACLU slam his company as a vessel for violent hate speech. Because over the past few months, Facebook has done a complete 180 on its position about speech, particularly sensitive political speech. Zuckerberg has apparently been shaken from his non-interventionist approach by announcing that FB wouldn't accept new political ads during the last week of the campaign, and just yesterday announcing that Facebook would crack down on holocaust deniers on its platform.*

The company has also launched salvos against QAnon and election-related misinformation, while taking an aggressive approach toward political advertising, and political content in general.

And as global authorities struggle to convince the public that an eventual COVID-19 vaccine will be safe to take despite the expedited approval process, ***Facebook has decided to give them a hand by banning all content encouraging users to refuse to take a vaccine. It laid out the new global policy in a blog post published Tuesday.***

> "Now, if an ad explicitly discourages someone from getting a vaccine, we'll reject it," the company's Head of Health Kang-Xing Jin and Director of Product Management Rob Leathern said in a blog post Tuesday.



Facebook will draw the line at allowing users who advocate against "mandatory vaccination," which the company said was a legitimate political position (not an argument made in "bad faith" that some on the left insist), to post as normal. They cited an example of a state lawmaker from Virginia who posted "STOP FORCED CORONAVIRUS VACCINATIONS".

While the above ad will be allowed under the new rules, ads that explicitly discourage people from taking vaccines by portraying the vaccines as ineffective or unsafe will be banned.

“If an ad that advocates for/against legislation or government policies explicitly discourages a vaccine, it will be rejected,” a spokesperson wrote CNBC. “That includes portraying vaccines as useless, ineffective, unsafe or unhealthy, describing the diseases vaccines are created for as harmless, or the ingredients in vaccines as harmful or deadly.”

Facebook also plans to push directions for all people about how and where to get the flu vaccine.

Exhibit 1: Summary of primary and secondary endpoints for Ph3 trials

Company	Platform	Primary endpoint	Secondary endpoint	Statistics	First interim Ph3 data
MRNA	mRNA	The primary endpoint will be the prevention of symptomatic COVID-19 disease ≥ 14 days post completion of vaccination regimen.	To evaluate efficacy of mRNA-1273 to prevent: severe COVID-19, serologically confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection or COVID-19 regardless of symptomatology, a secondary definition of COVID-19, death caused by COVID-19, COVID-19 after the first dose of mRNA-1273, COVID-19 in all study participants regardless of evidence of prior SARS-CoV-2 infection and asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection.	At the first interim analysis (53 cases), assuming VE is 60%, there is a <10% probability that MRNA is able to meet the statistical criteria successfully. At the second interim analysis (106 cases), the likelihood of meeting the statistical criteria increases to 65%. At the final analysis (151 cases), MRNA has a 90% probability of successfully meeting the statistical criterion. While the study was designed to evaluate 151 cases, interim analysis allow for the opportunity to investigate the data and potentially conclude the trial earlier if the vaccine is more efficacious than 60%. Assuming 75% VE, at the first interim analysis, there is a 50% probability of successfully meeting the statistical criteria, which increases to >95% at the second interim analysis of 106 cases. We anticipate a delta of between 4-<8 weeks between the first and second interim analyses, and place the data readouts for the study as likely between November and late January. Only cases that accumulate 14 days after the second dose will be counted for interim and final analysis, with events that occur prior to the second dose included in exploratory analysis.	First interim in November (base case)
PFE/BNTX	mRNA	The study will evaluate two primary endpoints — prevention of COVID-19 in those who have not been previously infected by SARS-CoV-2 prior to immunization and prevention of COVID-19 regardless of previous infection..	Secondary endpoints include prevention of severe COVID-19 infection in those groups and the study also will explore prevention of infection by SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19)	The primary efficacy analysis will be an event-driven analysis based on the number of participants with symptomatic or moderate/severe COVID-19 disease. With assumptions of a true VE of 60% and 4 IAs planned, 164 COVID-19 cases will provide 90% power to conclude true VE 52.3%. This would be achieved with a total 43,998 participants (21,999 vaccine recipients), based on the assumption of a 1.3% per year incidence in the placebo group, accrual of 164 primary-endpoint cases within 6 months, and 20% of the participants being nonevaluable.	End of October
AZN/University of Oxford	ChAdOx1 viral vector	To estimate the safety and efficacy of AZD1222 in the prevention of PCR-positive symptomatic COVID-19 ≥ 15 days post completion of vaccination regimen.	To estimate the efficacy AZD1222 for the prevention of: asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2, symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 using CDC criteria, University of Oxford defined symptomatic COVID-19, severe/critical COVID-19, COVID-19 related Emergency visits. To assess antibody responses to AZD1222 S antigen; determine anti-SARS-CoV-2 neutralising antibody levels in serum	For the primary efficacy analysis in the US study, c.150 events meeting the primary efficacy endpoint definition are required across the active and control groups. An interim efficacy analysis will be conducted when approximately 75 events meeting the primary efficacy endpoint definition have been reported.	Possibly end of 2020 (UK study; could be combined with Brazil and South Africa studies)
JNJ	Ad5 viral vector	The primary endpoint of the ENSEMBLE trial is the number of participants with first occurrence of molecularly confirmed and symptomatic moderate to severe/critical COVID-19 (with seronegative status)	Number of participants with first occurrence of molecularly confirmed moderate to severe/critical COVID-19 regardless of their serostatus and with seronegative status, as well as several other secondary endpoints.	The first 50% of planned participants had at least 2 months of follow-up after vaccination. A minimum of 6 COVID-19 cases for the age group greater than or equal to 60 years old. At least 20 cases meeting the primary endpoint definition of moderate to severe/critical COVID-19. A subset of at least 5 cases (in placebo arm) meeting the primary endpoint definition of severe/critical COVID-19. The trial has been designed to be 90% powered to detect 60% vaccine efficacy.	end of year/early 2021
NVAX	Genetically engineered recombinant protein	First occurrence of PCR-confirmed (1) symptomatic COVID-19 or (2) moderate-to-severe COVID-19 infection, with onset at least 7 days after the second dose in volunteers who have not been previously infected with SARS-CoV-2.	First occurrence of PCR-confirmed symptomatic moderate or severe COVID-19 infection with onset within seven days of second dose in volunteers with no prior SARS-CoV-2 infection	The primary efficacy analysis will be an event-driven analysis based on the number of participants with symptomatic or moderate/severe COVID-19 disease. Interim analyses will be performed when 50% and 75% of the desired number of these cases has been reached.	-
Sinopharm	inactivated virus	All confirmed COVID-19 cases at 14 days post two-doses of□vaccination.	To evaluate efficacy and incidence of adverse eventsat 30 minutes post injection, ~21/28 days post injection and 12 months post vaccination course.	-	-
SVA	inactivated virus	All confirmed COVID-19 cases after two doses immunization (two weeks post second dose and up to one year post first dose) Number of virologically-confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 patients at two weeks post second dose of vaccine.	To evaluate safety and efficacy (including seroconversion and cell-mediated immune profile; two weeks post last dose) and incidence of virologically-confirmed COVID-19 cases at two weeks post first and last dose.	-	-
CanSino Biologics	Ad5 viral vector	All COVID-19 cases from day 28-12 months post and efficacy of Ad5-nCoV in preventing virologically confirmed (PCR positive) COVID-19 cases Incidence of serious adverse events within 12 months of vaccination.	To evalutate the incidence of severe-COVID-19 cases (two weeks to one year post vaccination), solicited adverse reactions (within 7-days of vaccination), unsolicited adverse events (within 28 days of vaccination), seroconversion rate/immunogenicity of S-RBD IgG antibody (28 days post vaccination) and cell-mediated immune profile (28 days post vaccination).	-	-
Gamaleya	rAd26+ rAd5 viral vector	Percentge of trial subjects that develop PCR-confirmed COVID-19 within six months after the first dose of vaccine.	To evaluate the severity of the clinical course of COVID-19 (six months), antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 glycoprotein S (42 days and six months post first dose), antigen-specfic cellular immunity levels (28 days after the first dose), NAb titers (42 days after first dose, incidence of adverse events and severity of adverse events (average of six months).	-	-

Source: Company data, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

And news about JNJ’s latest halt has certainly not been encouraging, especially since the public still hasn’t been informed about whatever is going on with the halted AstraZeneca-Oxford trials in the US.

As we have noted, Facebook’s decision comes as Bill Gates questions the legitimacy of Trump’s FDA, and Kamala Harris tells the American people that she “wouldn’t take” a Trump-approved vaccine.

Would that be banned?

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