

Over half a million people taking part in pioneering COVID-19 research

- Over half a million people across the UK have taken part in COVID-19 research
- Participation has allowed UK-led research to deliver the world's first effective COVID-19 treatments
- 4 COVID-19 vaccine trials are currently underway across the UK due to ground-breaking participant recruitment

The UK is on the front foot of its commitment to understand how this virus spreads, and find treatments and vaccines, with the total number of British people involved in COVID-19 urgent public health research soaring from 100,000 in June to over half a million today.

Recruiting participants at unprecedented pace and scale has led to the development of life-saving treatments for COVID-19 hospitalised patients, including the recently announced findings that arthritis drug tocilizumab can be effective in treating the sickest COVID-19 patients.

The vast number of participants has meant some of the world's most promising vaccine candidates are being developed through UK-based studies, and has enabled initial results around vaccine effectiveness to be published at an unparalleled pace. It is due to rigorous clinical trials such as these that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been able to authorise Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine for use in the UK, making the UK the first country in the western world to authorise a COVID-19 vaccine.

Three large-scale vaccine studies have been rolled out in the UK over recent months, while other promising new vaccines will be confirmed soon for delivery. Tens of thousands of people have already taken part in vaccine trials across the UK through these phase 3 trials.

Health Secretary, Matt Hancock said:

I want to thank every single person – from staff members to participants – who have taken part in this research. Everyone's involvement has provided a vital link in the chain to help us better understand this virus and I am confident we will find a resolution through the ingenuity of science.

The scale at which research into treatments for COVID-19 has taken place in the UK is unparalleled, and the determination for the country to come together to beat this virus is extraordinary.

We understand this virus infinitely more than at the start of this pandemic and each of us must continue to look at what role we can take. By coming together and using our scientific prowess, we will prevail.

The dramatic rise in enrolment over recent months is testament to the world-leading research infrastructure in the UK, as well as the willingness of people to participate in vital COVID-19 studies. Dedicated hard work from the National Institute for Health Research, the NHS and the devolved nations has ensured as many UK patients as possible benefit from the latest innovations in science and medicine.

Since March, 73 urgent public health studies into COVID-19 have been set up to investigate a range of potential treatments, vaccines and observational studies to learn more about the disease, as well as research into new diagnostic technology. NHS hospitals have played a vital role in delivering studies at pace and scale, enabling hospitalised patients to benefit from the latest COVID-19 treatments, in addition to helping tens of thousands of people gain early access to vaccine candidates through trials running across the country.

Chief Medical Officer for England and co-lead of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Professor Chris Whitty said:

The willingness of the UK public to participate in COVID-19 research has been inspiring. Science is the only way out of this pandemic. It will find new ways to prevent and treat the virus, and this will allow us to gradually return to normal life. This science cannot happen without those who volunteer to take part in research.

The National Institute for Health Research, as part of the wider UK research infrastructure, has been key to the UK's success in delivering research with actionable findings, which have had an impact on the treatment of COVID-19 patients in the UK and around the world.

Dr William van't Hoff, Chief Executive of the NIHR Clinical Research Network, which has managed these studies for the Department of Health and Social Care, said:

Building on the fantastic progress we have made so far, coupled with the early positive results from the vaccine trials, it is vital that people continue to take part in the wide range of research the NIHR is supporting. We need more effective treatments, vaccines and better diagnostic tests to help not only people affected by this, but, critically, to also help the NHS manage this devastating infection. For that, we still need many thousands more participants to continue to volunteer for these vital studies. I encourage people to do this by visiting the [Be Part of Research website](#) or signing up to the [NHS COVID vaccine register](#).

Advancing the science around how the virus spreads across the population is vital to tackling the pandemic. Findings from observational studies, such as the [ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey](#), provide important metrics on where

infection rates are rising across the country and are shared with public health authorities and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) in real time to inform policy and decision-making at the highest level.

Ensuring rapid, accurate and effective testing is widely available across the population is another key element in controlling the spread of the virus. Accurate diagnosis of infection, identification of immunity and monitoring the clinical progression of infection is of paramount importance. The government is ensuring key research within this area through the [COVID-19 National Diagnostic Research and Evaluation Platform \(CONDOR\)](#). There is a range of diagnostic and observational studies currently underway through this platform, which will pave the way to the development of advanced new testing technologies.

Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of the NHS, said:

Helping so many participate in vital and urgent COVID-19 research is a phenomenal achievement by scientists and clinicians across the NHS. The speed and flexibility shown in these impressive studies now also should become the 'new normal' across the health service for wide ranging research on many other health conditions.

Today's milestone shows the remarkable national effort to tackle the pandemic. It is vital we maintain this speed of recruitment and the high uptake of participants to COVID-19 research to ensure ongoing and future studies are sufficiently powered to establish the very best vaccines that will work for as many people as possible, and to ensure we continue to find treatments for COVID-19 as quickly as possible.

The 4 vaccine trials currently underway across the UK are:

Novavax Covid Vaccine Study: 11,955 participants

A phase 3 trial of NVX-CoV2373 – a recombinant spike protein nanoparticle vaccine developed by US biotech firm, Novavax. The world's first participants to receive the vaccine through this phase 3 trial were recruited in the UK through one of the NIHR's new patient recruitment centres.

Oxford Vaccine Trial (COV002): 10,754 participants

A phase 3 trial of ChAdOx1 – an adenovirus vaccine vector. Jointly funded by NIHR and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), COV002 was one of the world's first COVID-19 vaccines to move into phase 3 trials with fast-tracked research delivery support provided by NIHR.

Imperial Vaccine Trial: 414 participants

Jointly funded by NIHR and UKRI, this is an early stage (phase 2) trial of LNP-nCoVsaRNA – a self-amplifying RNA vaccine developed by Imperial College London.

Janssen Phase 3 Vaccine Study: study opened mid-November

The world's first phase 3 trial to test the safety and effectiveness of a new vaccine, developed by The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies. The study will recruit 30,000 people worldwide.

Many more new studies, investigating some of the world's most exciting COVID-19 treatments and prophylactics to prevent disease are continually being added to the urgent public health research portfolio. These include cutting-edge studies into new monoclonal antibodies, inhaled antiviral treatments, and a range of promising potential vaccine candidates.

The [ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey](#) investigates the incidence of COVID-19 infection and prevalence of immunity to COVID-19 in the UK general population – assessed through repeated cross-sectional household surveys with additional serial sampling and longitudinal follow-up. The survey has now enrolled 297,988 participants.

Alongside the COVID-19 research, a wide and active portfolio of research into other conditions continues to be undertaken. 2,715 non-COVID studies have recruited participants since March 2020 and a further 1,000 studies are currently being set up. Over 210,000 participants have been recruited into these studies since March 2020.

It is important to note that patients can take part in more than one study – for example, in observational and interventional trials simultaneously. Therefore, the total number of participants does not equate to the same number of individual patients involved in studies. To ensure patient confidentiality, the NIHR does not keep data on individual numbers of patients.

You can take part in studies by visiting the [Be Part of Research website](#) or by [signing up to the NHS COVID vaccine register](#).