

Vaccines change the situation

Many governments, health services and the world health bodies have always wanted a vaccine to be the eventual way out of the pandemic. Yesterday they got much nearer to that outcome, with the announcement of the formal recognition of the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer BioN Tech vaccine by the UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and the roll out of the Sputnik V vaccine as an approved treatment in Russia.

Dr June Raine, the CEO of the MHRA, was keen to tell UK residents that "the public's safety has always been at the forefront of our minds – safety is our watchword." She assured her audience that they had not taken any short cuts and had pored over much data before concluding the product meets both their safety and their efficacy standards.

The Pfizer vaccine uses a relatively new technique, mRNA, to trigger immune responses should the virus attack. So too does the Moderna product, which may soon follow with a permission. The Astra Zeneca Oxford University vaccine may be third to get approval, and uses a Replication deficient viral vector. They needed to supply more information on their tests given the different doses actually deployed with different results.

I always point out this site does not give medical advice, as I am not qualified. Individuals thinking of accepting a vaccination need to make their own decisions based on the information provided by the companies supplying the product and the NHS, and may take their own doctor's advice if they have concerns.

If enough people volunteer for the vaccination, as seems likely given the strong encouragement from the NHS and from the government's own medical experts, it will be easier to secure a removal of controls over our lives.

There should be no question of people having to take the vaccine, nor of vaccine passports being used as a lever to get more people to take the vaccine. The vaccine should stand on its own merits. The more information the Regulators can share with the public the better, as confidence comes from an open approach, not from hectoring and limited communication of the facts.

First use of the first vaccine is likely to be in hospitals who have the specialist equipment to store the vaccine. There will be guidance about who has priority to receive it.