

COVID-19 treatments could be fast-tracked through new national clinical trial initiative

- rapidly scaled-up national initiative will mean clinical trials could start in weeks rather than months
- 6 drugs entering clinical trials as part of national effort made possible by government, academia and industry working together
- this will give an early indication of whether these drugs could save lives and improve the outcomes of the most vulnerable patients with COVID-19

Thousands of patients could benefit from potential treatments for COVID-19 that will be fast-tracked through a new national clinical trial, the Health and Care Secretary has today announced.

This platform will accelerate the development of new drugs for patients hospitalised with COVID-19, reducing the time taken to set up clinical studies for new therapies from months to just weeks and helping to ease pressure on the NHS and ultimately save lives.

6 potential drugs will initially enter the programme, with the first of these beginning phase 2 studies – the stage of a clinical trial focused on the testing of a drug on patients to assess how effective it is and side effects – across the UK imminently.

Announcing the news at today's press conference, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Currently no drugs in the world have been clinically proven to treat COVID-19. But our Therapeutics Taskforce has identified a number of promising candidates. Currently, 6 different treatments have been entered into national clinical trials and the first is ready to enter the next stage: a new early phase clinical trial platform that we are launching today.

This is a national effort made possible by government, academia and industry working together.”

Funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), this collaborative programme – known as the ACCORD (Accelerating COVID-19 Research & Development platform) – aims to get an early indication of drug treatments' effectiveness in treating coronavirus and if positive results are seen, these drugs will advance rapidly into the

large-scale trials currently in progress across the country.

ACCORD brings together a single, UK-wide clinical trial platform provided by the clinical research company IQVIA and the UK's leading research expertise through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), to rapidly test potential drugs through early stage clinical trials and feed them into the UK's large-scale COVID-19 studies such as the [RECOVERY trial](#), currently the world's largest randomised controlled clinical trial for COVID-19 treatment. It is reducing the time taken to set up clinical studies from months to just weeks.

ACCORD is part of a co-ordinated therapeutic development pathway that the government has put in place, overseen by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and delivered by the UKRI, as part of the overall Therapeutics Taskforce.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

"The UK is home to world-class scientists and researchers who are united in their aim to defeat coronavirus.

"Through ACCORD, we are bringing together the government, industry and research organisations to speed up the development of effective new coronavirus treatments, helping to save thousands of people's lives and benefiting our NHS."

Further potential treatments will be rapidly fed into ACCORD as the programme rolls out over the next few weeks.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport said:

"This initiative will rapidly test the most promising drugs in the fight against COVID-19. Bringing together expertise from across the UK's world-class research and innovation sectors – from clinical researchers through to the pharmaceutical industry – this national platform will rapidly prioritise and deliver the best potential drugs into clinical trials to discover if they can help people with COVID-19."

ACCORD has been made possible by partnership working between the Government Scientific Office, the NIHR's Biomedical Research Centres and Clinical Research Facilities, and expert centres in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, clinical research company IQVIA and biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

Professor Tom Wilkinson, ACCORD clinical academic lead based at the NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre, said:

"There has been a tremendous effort to pull this initiative together so rapidly. ACCORD is a national effort and will be key to developing effective new treatments which are needed so desperately."

"The ACCORD platform will be able to rapidly test potential new treatments, advancing the most promising through phase 2 clinical trials into the NHS.

This unique national platform for developing new COVID-19 drug candidates will access the world-class expertise and resources of the NIHR Respiratory Translational Research Collaboration and allied centres nationwide.”

Through the Therapeutic Taskforce, the life science sector can suggest potential drugs or molecules that could be tested through the ACCORD platform. Data will be open source and freely available to enable global knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Dr Jonathan Sheffield, NIHR COVID-19 Research Operations Director said:

“ACCORD will transform the way in which the UK’s research community finds treatments for global healthcare challenges such as COVID-19. ACCORD is an exemplary case of government, industry and research organisations working together with urgency, to the benefit of patients and the NHS.”

“The NIHR’s experimental medicine infrastructure of people, facilities and technology is well-placed to fast-track research into COVID-19 treatments.”

In addition to the first drugs being tested, the Therapeutics Task Force continues to identify potential early stage drugs to be trialled through the ACCORD platform.

IQVIA is providing a national, single platform to ACCORD and will deliver the trials via NIHR’s world-class network of investigators and research facilities, and partners sites in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. AstraZeneca will work with the pharmaceutical industry to scope and support rapid upscaling of development and trials.

Tim Sheppard IQVIA UK GM and SVP Northern Europe said:

“COVID-19 is the greatest public health challenge that has faced the world in a generation. Hyper-accelerating clinical trials of medicines in discovery pipelines could be instrumental in saving many lives in the UK and beyond.”

“IQVIA is proud to be able to mobilise our platform and use our vast network of clinical trial infrastructure, research expertise and data analytics to work with the ACCORD partners to develop treatments that can change the course of this pandemic.”

The first wave of new and existing medicines to be tested through the ACCORD-2 platform are:

For further info on the BerGenBio compound, please contact Richard Godfrey, CEO of BerGenBio, at media@bergenbio.com.