

Over 5,000 people enrolled in UK-wide study for antivirals

Over 5,000 vulnerable people have now enrolled into a world-class study for the chance to receive life-saving antivirals, the government has announced today (Wednesday 26 January 2022).

This ground-breaking achievement makes the PANORAMIC study the fastest-recruiting trial of its kind ever in the UK.

The significant milestone means the UK is one step closer to rolling out the innovative medicines – which are being evaluated to see if they help to reduce the severity of symptoms and the risk of hospitalisation or death – more widely across the country, eventually helping to ease pressures on the NHS.

Anyone over the age of 50 or between 18 to 49 with certain underlying health conditions can [sign up to the study](#) as soon as they receive a positive PCR or lateral flow test result. They need to be experiencing COVID-19 symptoms that began in the last five days to be eligible to enrol.

The UK-wide PANORAMIC study, run by the University of Oxford and supported by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the devolved administrations, now has 5,171 participants enrolled.

The government, through the Antivirals Taskforce, has procured 4.98 million courses of antivirals – including 2.23 million courses of molnupiravir and 2.75 million courses of PF-07321332+ritonavir – more per head than any other country in Europe.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The UK is leading the way when it comes to antivirals and this is a landmark milestone for the deployment of these cutting-edge treatments – which will be crucial as we learn to live with the virus by keeping our most vulnerable safe if they catch it.

The PANORAMIC study is vital in helping our medical experts to develop plans for rolling these treatments out more widely later this year. If you test positive for COVID-19 and are eligible, please sign up as soon as possible.

Earlier this week, the government, along with leading charities such as Kidney Care UK, Cystic Fibrosis Trust, Diabetes UK and the British Liver Trust, put out an urgent call for at least 6,000 more participants to come forward for the treatments.

This is so that scientific experts can understand more about how to deploy

these treatments in the NHS more widely later in the year – including who would benefit most from them.

Antivirals are medicines which can be swallowed as a pill or capsule to help treat people with COVID-19 infections. Molnupiravir, which is currently being deployed through the study, has shown to reduce this for at risk, non-hospitalised adults with mild to moderate COVID-19 by 30% – potentially saving thousands of lives once the drugs are available to the NHS.

Professor Chris Butler, co-Chief Investigator of the PANORAMIC study, University of Oxford, said:

Despite all the amazing support already given to the PANORAMIC study, we need even more people in the early stages of their COVID illness to urgently share their experiences with us and sign-up directly through the PANORAMIC website.

This will help us rapidly find out who will benefit most from the new treatments, so they can be given to the right people when they get sick.

It is open to anyone living in the UK who meets the following criteria:

- Have received a positive PCR or lateral flow test for COVID-19 and feel unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 that started in the last five days; and
- are aged 50 and over, or 18 to 49 years old with certain underlying medical conditions that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19.

While vaccines remain the most important first line of defence against the virus, antivirals are used after someone contracts the virus to slow it down, make symptoms less severe and complications less common.

The antiviral, molnupiravir, that is part of the PANORAMIC trial, was granted approval for use by the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA) in November 2021, and so far no unexpected safety findings have been reported in clinical trials.

Alongside the PANORAMIC study, those at highest risk from the virus can access the antivirals and other COVID-19 treatments through the NHS.

Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, said:

It's very promising to see people sign-up for this important trial and to those who have a huge thank you. But this needs to be a very large study; closer to 20,000 volunteers may be needed to get an accurate answer, so please keep coming forward if you get COVID-19 over the next few days, weeks and months.

You can make a real difference in helping us work out how best to use COVID-19 antiviral drugs for many years to come.

These drugs are already approved by the MHRA, but we need to see how much benefit they give to already vaccinated patients.

If I'm unlucky enough to get COVID-19 and meet the criteria, then I will definitely be taking part.

Eddie Gray, Chair of the Antivirals Taskforce, said:

Antivirals will form an important part of living with COVID-19 – and could eventually be a big help in stopping hospitals from being overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients.

This is a fantastic achievement for the PANORAMIC study and for the deployment of antivirals – please sign-up to the study if you test positive for the virus and are eligible.

Professor Nick Lemoine, Medical Director of the NIHR Clinical Research Network, said:

PANORAMIC is one of the most important COVID-19 trials of recent times. It's also by far the world's largest trial on molnupiravir – the first treatment to be assessed – and will provide vital information about how well this new antiviral capsule works in at-risk groups, within a predominantly vaccinated population.