

J&J boosters for healthcare workers



The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) have approved vaccine booster doses for all healthcare workers who received a J&J vaccine as part of the Sisonke Study.

This comes after the

United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended a second dose of the J&J vaccine for all Americans 18 years and older, who received a single dose.

Early this year, the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) worked with

the Department of Health, Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa and J&J to provide early access to the single-dose J&J vaccine.

A new trial has since evaluated a booster dose, given at least two months after the first dose, in 31 300 participants from more than nine countries.

According to the data, vaccine efficacy against the disease was 94% in the US and 75% globally.

At a global level, vaccine efficacy was 100% against severe disease and critical disease.

"In this study, two doses were safe and usual vaccine side effects were reduced following the second dose," the SAMRC said.

Sisonke Study

In South Africa, 496 424 health workers received

a dose of the J&J vaccine, to evaluate its effectiveness, between 17 February and 17 May 2021.

"By rolling out the Sisonke Study, we bought valuable time for healthcare workers, and were able to protect them four months ahead of the national rollout and ahead of the Delta-driven third wave," said one of the co-national Principal Investigators of the study, Professor Glenda Gray.

The Sisonke Study showed that the J&J vaccine was safe, easy to administer and provided good protection against severe disease and death.

The single-dose regimen has since been administered to other essential workers, such as educators, police officers and those living in rural locations.

In addition, more than 5.2 million people in South Africa have re-