

UK approves GSK COVID drug, appears effective against Omicron

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British regulators on Thursday approved a GlaxoSmithKline drug to treat those at high risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms, with the manufacturer saying it appears effective against the new Omicron variant.

The [antibody treatment](#), sotrovimab, "was found to be safe and effective at reducing the [risk](#) of hospitalisation and death in people with mild to moderate COVID-19 infection who are at an increased risk of developing severe disease," said the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Preclinical data showed that the drug "retains activity against key mutations of the new Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant," GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) said in a statement.

"To date, sotrovimab has demonstrated ongoing activity against all tested variants of concern and interest defined by the World Health Organization (WHO)," it added.

Testing is ongoing "to confirm the neutralising activity of sotrovimab against the combination of all the Omicron mutations with the intent to provide an update by the end of 2021."

A single dose of the drug was found to reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death by 79 percent in high-risk adults with symptomatic COVID-19 infection, according to the MHRA.

Sotrovimab was developed by Britain's GSK and Vir Biotechnology based out of California.

It is a monoclonal antibody, a type of protein that attaches to the spike protein of the coronavirus, reducing its ability to enter the body's cells.

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