

Brazilian institute announces home-made COVID-19 vaccine

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Sao Paulo's Butantan biomedical institute announced on Friday it is developing a "100 percent Brazilian" vaccine against COVID-19 and expects to start using it in July.

Butantan is the largest vaccine producer in Brazil and makes the CoronaVac shot produced by Chinese firm Sinovac—the most widely used against the pandemic in the South American country.

ButanVac will also be produced in Thailand and Vietnam and distributed to poorer countries.

"The results in pre-[clinical tests](#) were excellent," said Butantan director Dimas Covas.

The vaccine needs to be authorized by Brazil's vaccine regulator Anvisa before it can start [clinical trials](#) in April.

Brazil has faced a shortfall in vaccine doses due to import delays at the worst possible time with record numbers of daily infections and deaths registered this week.

It has now recorded 12.3 million cases—300,000 of them fatal—among its 212 million population.

Butantan will be able to produce 40 million doses from May to July and 100 million by the end of the year, Sao Paulo state governor Joao Doria said.

While the CoronaVac shot is produced using imported materials, ButanVac will be "a vaccine entirely developed and produced in Brazil, without the need to import" an [active ingredient](#) needed to produce vaccines, added Doria.

ButanVac "is the response to those that deny the science and life," said Doria in a barb at Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro, who spent months downplaying the seriousness of the coronavirus and also opposed [preventative measures](#) such as mask-wearing and the shutting down of industry.

The far-right leader likewise cast doubt on the efficacy of CoronaVac.

Doria is expected to challenge Bolsonaro for the presidency in next year's election.

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