

Vaccines tested for use against bird flu

Human testing on a two potential vaccines against the H5N1 strain of bird flu has begun in Germany and Belgium, according to GlaxoSmithKline PLC.

A total of 800 healthy volunteers in Germany and Belgium are being tested to evaluate the vaccines' safety and ability to boost a person's immune response against H5N1, The Wall Street Journal reported Friday.

Health officials worry that the H5N1 bird flu strain could mutate into a strain that would pass easily among humans, causing a pandemic.

The serum being tested in Germany contains an adjuvant -- an agent that modifies the effect of other agents while having few if any direct effects when given by themselves -- that the researchers hope will help stretch the vaccine to a greater number of doses.

In Belgium, Glaxo is testing a vaccine with a newer type of adjuvant it hopes will help protect people against a broader range of H5N1 strains because no one knows which exact form of H5N1 could emerge as the strain that causes a pandemic.

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