Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

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8th December 2021

Dear [redacted]

Our Ref: FOI 21/957

Thank you for your information request, dated 2nd November 2021, in which you asked us to provide images we hold and store in electronic format of the content of the UK Government Covid experimental vaccines.

I am pleased to provide you with some of the information requested, see below.

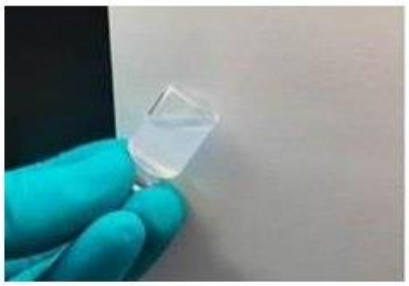
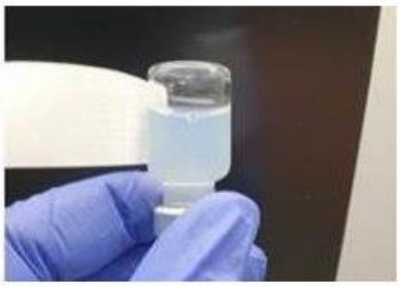
The COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK vaccination programme have been authorised for use by the MHRA.
The MHRA does not hold images of experimental COVID-19 vaccines.

The MHRA (DMRC) does receive images of vials from authorised vaccines through the Yellow Card reporting system, and in some cases have shown particles to be present.

At the behest of the MHRA (DMRC) some vials were received by NIBSC for a visual inspection test. The visual inspection test itself is not invasive – it is a review against two monochrome backgrounds to observe particulate matter visible to the naked eye – the content (composition) of a vaccine is not examined. For routine independent batch testing, sampled vials must meet the specification stipulated in the licence approval for this test for the batch to be considered for certification by NIBSC. Only batches with a certificate can be marketed by the manufacturer.

The visual inspection test was performed and photographs taken. The majority of photographs are not blinded and the batch identification cannot be shared under FOI Section 43, however, example images from two vials are indicated in the two panels below, to illustrate test observations.

All vials held were subsequently dispatched so that the manufacturer could use them in their own investigation.

As some of the information is exempt from release, the details of the relevant exemption is outlined below.
Section 43 – Commercial interests: information where disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person, including third parties or the public authority that holds the information. Section 43 is a qualified exemption, which means that we have considered whether the public interest in releasing the information is outweighed by the public interest in not giving the information. However, we consider that the public interest will be better served by not releasing the information. Releasing the information would also prejudice the Agency's commercial interests in this case and in future. As a market regulator, it is vital that the Agency can freely engage in dialogue with organisations about commercial activities.

The Freedom of Information Act only entitles you access to information – the information supplied is subject to Crown copyright, and there are some restrictions on its re-use. For information on the reproduction or re-use of MHRA information, please visit https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reproduce-or-re-use-mhra-information/reproduce-or-re-use-mhra-information.

If you disagree with how we have interpreted the Freedom of Information Act 2000 with regards to your request, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. The review will be carried out by a senior member of the Agency who was not involved with the original decision.

If you have a query about the information provided, please reply to this email.

Yours sincerely

MHRA Customer Service Centre

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