EU must use all vaccine options to beat COVID: EMA

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EU states must use all the vaccine options available to fight the coronavirus pandemic, and it is too early to tell if a particular type is best, the European Medicines Agency said on Thursday.

The comments come as several countries limit the use of so-called viral vector jabs like AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson due to a link with rare blood clots, and opt instead for Messenger RNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna.

"We are still in a pandemic, and it's very important that in this fight against this pandemic we use all the options we have available," Marco Cavaleri, EMA head of vaccines strategy, told a news conference.

Cavaleri said it was then "up to member states how they use them in the best interest of public health".

The EMA earlier this week denied that Cavaleri had suggested in an interview with an Italian newspaper dropping the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine, even for people over 60 to whom it's currently limited in a number of states.

Cavaleri said Thursday the episode was "rather unfortunate and essentially was a misunderstanding on many aspects".

The EMA expert added it was "very difficult to say" which type of vaccine technology might prove the most dominant in future, and that all existing jabs had "already been saving thousands and millions of lives".

"Whether in the future there will be a certain type of vaccine like the messenger RNA that will remain the main one or not, whether other platform technologies... will remain as ancillary vaccine that could play an important role in controlling this coronavirus, is difficult to say right now," he said.

"We are just glad to have so many options."

The EMA has currently authorised four vaccines: Pfizer/BioNTech,

Moderna, AstraZeneca and J&J.

One of another four under review—Germany's CureVac—suffered a blow when interim trial results Wednesday showed it was just 47 percent effective.

That falls below the EMA's threshold of 50 percent efficacy but Cavaleri said that "this does not mean that we will not look into the entirety of the evidence" before reaching a decision.

Meanwhile the regulator revealed that the number of J&J doses held back in the EU as a precaution after a batch in the US, made at the same time, was contaminated with material from another vaccine was 17 million.

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