

Protein Sciences' Vaccine Cleared For Trials

Meriden Company Developing H1N1 Vaccine

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MERIDEN, Conn. -- A Meriden company developing an H1N1 vaccine got the go-ahead from the FDA Thursday to start clinical trials of their vaccine in the U.S.

Protein Sciences is also getting a promise of millions of dollars from the federal government.

Researchers and scientists at Protein Sciences are busy fine-tuning a vaccine they hope will prevent the virus from spreading to a pandemic state. The company said it's hoping for the best, but still expecting the worst.

"The upcoming influenza season is going to be a severe one, and we just need all the vaccine we can get," said Dr. Manon Cox, the company's chief operating officer.

The vaccine is undergoing clinical trials currently in Australia.

"They're in the midst of an H1N1 outbreak there so their sense of urgency down there was little bit higher," said Protein Sciences President and CEO Dan Adams.

Rep. Chris Murphy helped deliver the news from the FDA at the company on Thursday.

"This little vial is the vaccine. This is what's being tried right now in Australia – soon this will be shipped to China too and then residents in New York and Kentucky, but not in Connecticut, because we don't have a clinical trial network set up here," Murphy said.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is giving Protein Sciences \$147 million over five years to pay for the trials and to mass produce the vaccine.

"We have some manufacturing challenges ahead of us. Today we are producing the vaccine at 500 liter scale, which means we could make about 100,000 doses a week, but obviously with a population of over 300 million in the U.S. alone, you would like to be able to make much more," said Cox.

The company's CEO said they hope to hire 40 more people by next year.

The first results of the trials in Australia are expected to be in next week. If it all goes as planned, the company said the vaccine could be available as early as this November.