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## Britain approves Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

Roll-out could begin early next week

REUTERS  
LONDON *3/12/20*

Britain approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday, jumping ahead of the rest of the world in the race to begin the most crucial mass inoculation programme in history with a shot tested in wide-scale clinical trials.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the green light from the U.K.'s medicine authority as a global win and a ray of hope amid the pandemic. "Fantastic news," Mr. Johnson told Parliament, though he cautioned that people should not get too carried away.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) granted emergency use approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which they say is 95% effective in preventing illness, just 23 days since Pfizer published the first data from its final stage clinical trial.

Britain said it would start vaccinating those most at risk of dying early next week after it gets 8,00,000 doses from Pfizer's manufacturing centre in Belgium.

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The approval of a shot for use close to a year since the novel coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China, is a triumph for science, Pfizer boss Albert Bourla and his German biotechnology partner BioNTech.

Both the U.S. and the European Union's regulator are sifting through the same Pfizer vaccine trial data, but have not yet given their ap-

proval. Britain's breakneck speed drew criticism from Brussels where, in an unusually blunt statement, the EU's drugs regulator said its longer procedure was more appropriate as it was based on more evidence and required more checks.

However, MHRA chief June Raine said in a televised briefing that "no corners have been cut".