

FIRST NEWS EDUCATION TV

COVID VACCINES FOR CHILDREN?

Dr Grace Li



A COVID-19 vaccine study began this week with children. But what for, when the virus mainly affects older people? FYI presenter Tilly Lockey investigated with a panel of young people – Ruby from Kettering, Oliver and Trey from London, Nikita from Walsall and Farrah from Pontypridd, Wales. They put their questions to Dr Grace Li, part of the Oxford University AstraZeneca vaccine team.

TILLY: The team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is doing what's known as a clinical trial. It's to make sure that their vaccine works for children as well as it works for adults. But how exactly is this trial going to work?

DR GRACE LI: We're going to recruit 300 children aged between 6 and 17, based at four different centres. One is here in Oxford, the other three are in Bristol, Southampton and St George's in London. We're going to start off by enrolling teenagers aged between 12 and 17. And, then, after that, we're going to recruit younger children aged between 6 and 11.

TILLY: Should this trial be successful, when do you think children above the age of five will be able to get vaccinated?

DR GRACE LI: The trial at the moment is meant to be running over approximately a year, so we're going to take blood tests from children over the next 12 months or so. And, as we've seen in the adult trial, sometimes you can get some results early, and that means, sometimes, that the vaccine can be approved before the end of the trial.

RUBY: So if all the adults are protected and most children don't get very ill from coronavirus, should we actually make a vaccine for children?

DR GRACE LI: Actually, in the first wave, you're right, most people who got admitted to hospital were mostly grandparents and older people who got really sick. What we haven't seen as much in the news is that there were a few children, mostly children who already had what we call pre-existing medical conditions, and there were some of them who got very sick and got admitted to children's intensive care. So, it might be that the vaccine is used in a really small group of children who are very vulnerable. Also, we're still finding out quite a lot about how coronavirus affects both adults and children. We're not sure, for example, whether there are long-term effects of COVID on our health. There are some people who say they still have symptoms a couple of months later. And there are lots of other things we don't know about how

coronavirus spreads yet, so this trial is going to look at how effective the vaccine is.

FARRAH: Will it be dangerous for kids to take part in the vaccine trial?

DR GRACE LI: So, the vaccine trial that's taking place now, we planned initially when we started all of the adult trials 12 months ago, so it was always our intention to do a trial on children. And, at the moment, we've got safety data from over 25,000 adults in the UK, Brazil and also in South Africa as well. So, we've got data from 25,000 adults, which shows that the vaccine is really safe and works really well in adults. That makes us really confident that actually there will be almost no safety concerns when we're going into a trial with children. So, we don't expect there to be any concerns, no. And, the way that safety is monitored in the study is that we very carefully watch and we ask people to put into a diary any side effects that they might have from the vaccine. And, if there are any worries at all, then we obviously chat and we think about whether or not we can go on with the study.

NIKITA: I'm just wondering when everyone has been vaccinated, obviously adults and children, does that mean we can finally start living normal lives again, and this pandemic is over?

DR GRACE LI: I'm sure all of you are aware that one of the biggest problems we have with the vaccine is the supply. So, if we could vaccinate everybody, absolutely everybody, then that, possibly, could be one reason why we might be able to get back to normal life. But, at the moment, vaccine supply is really one of the biggest stumbling blocks to recovering from this pandemic. And we have to really target certain parts of the population, the ones we know are the most vulnerable and the ones we know are the most likely to get really sick. We have to really prioritise those people because we just don't have enough. We can't make it fast enough for the whole world. So, at the moment, if there are children who are very vulnerable, as we mentioned, there are some children who have

pre-existing medical conditions, then those are the ones who we should prioritise for vaccines.

TREY: They say children are asymptomatic [don't show any symptoms], but we still spread the virus. Would having the vaccine stop us from spreading the virus?

DR GRACE LI: That's a really tricky experiment, actually, to prove. So, obviously, if you don't have any symptoms but you spread it, it makes it really difficult to know which people to test. And this has been one of the biggest problems in the study so far. I'm sure some of you might have had friends or family [who got] notes through the post asking you to do a swab regardless of whether you have symptoms. So what they're trying to do in those swabbing tests is to figure out how many people actually have COVID but don't have any symptoms and how does that change across different ages. So, those tests that they're sending out around the country, they're testing different ages and different symptoms and trying to get a picture of how many people who actually do have COVID don't have any symptoms. And that's an incredibly huge study to do – if you can imagine how many people you need to test and how many swabs you need to do every week. So the biggest problem they're trying to solve right now is what exactly does transmission look like? What sort of numbers are involved and what does this mean for school and going on holiday?

FARRAH: There remains a concern in the black and minority ethnic [BAME] community as to whether these trials will be safe. I'm just wondering if the clinical trials in children will have a diverse population tested?

DR GRACE LI: I'm really glad you asked that question. Absolutely. We're really actively encouraging children from BAME backgrounds to be recruited into the study. On all of our promotional material and all of the websites, we clearly state that we'd really love anyone who's from any minority background to take part. And we have a website where you can sign up for the study and we really, really want you there.

GLOSSARY

swab — When a cotton wool swab, which is like an ear-bud, is used to collect a small amount of bodily fluid in order to check for infection.



Questions on: First News Education TV: 'COVID vaccines for children?'

Part A: Find and explain the facts

A1. Who is Dr Grace Li?

A2. The team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is doing a clinical trial to make sure that their vaccine works for children as well as it works for adults. How exactly is the trial going to work?

Number the statements 1-4 to reflect Dr Li's answer to this question.

We're going to start off by enrolling teenagers aged between 12 and 17.	
One is here in Oxford, the other three are in Bristol, Southampton and St George's in London.	
We're going to recruit 300 children between 6 and 17, based at four different centres.	
After that, we're going to recruit younger children aged between 6 and 11.	

A3. Decide whether the statements are true or false. If false, please provide the correction.

STATEMENT	TRUE OR FALSE	CORRECTION (if applicable)
The clinical trial at the moment is meant to be running over approximately a year.		
Blood tests will be taken from children over the next six months or so.		
Initially, the team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine had not planned to do a trial on children.		
At the moment, there aren't any concerns about vaccine supply.		
The team are actively encouraging children from BAME backgrounds to be recruited into the study so that a diverse population will be tested.		

A4. In the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, who mostly got admitted to hospital?

A5. How is safety going to be monitored in the study?

Part B: Deduce and infer information

B1. Most children don't get very ill from coronavirus, so why is a vaccine trial for children necessary?

B2. What makes Dr Li and her team "really confident that actually there will be almost no safety concerns" in their vaccine trial with children?

B3. Suggest why the team are going to start enrolling older children and teenagers first.

B4. Why doesn't Dr Li give a date for when children above the age of five will be able to get vaccinated?

B5. Why have some people been sent swabs through the post regardless of whether they have symptoms?

Part C: Analyse the writing and presentation

C1. Comment on the use of the question mark in the headline.

C2. Suggest why an interview format involving a panel of young people was used for this report.

C3. If you had the opportunity to ask Dr Li a question about COVID vaccines for children, what would you ask and why?

GLOSSARY

swab — when a cotton wool swab, which is like an ear-bud, is used to collect a small amount of bodily fluid in order to check for infection.



Questions on: Special Report: COVID-19 vaccine interview

Part A: Find and explain the facts

A1. Who is Dr Grace Li?

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A2. The team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is doing a clinical trial to make sure that their vaccine works for children as well as it works for adults. How exactly is the trial going to work?

Number the statements 1-4 to reflect Dr Li’s answer to this question.

We’re going to start off by enrolling teenagers aged between 12 and 17.	
One is here in Oxford, the other three are in Bristol, Southampton and St George’s in London.	
We’re going to recruit 300 children between 6 and 17, based at four different centres.	
After that, we’re going to recruit younger children aged between 6 and 11.	

A3. Decide whether the statements are true or false. If false, please provide the correction.

STATEMENT	TRUE OR FALSE	CORRECTION (if applicable)
The clinical trial at the moment is meant to be running over approximately a year.	
Blood tests will be taken from children over the next six months or so.	
Initially, the team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine had not planned to do a trial on children.	
At the moment, there aren’t any concerns about vaccine supply.	
The team are actively encouraging children from BAME backgrounds to be recruited into the study so that a diverse population will be tested.	

A4. In the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, who mostly got admitted to hospital?

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A5. How is safety going to be monitored in the study?

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Teacher Answers

AIM OF THE NEWS COMPREHENSIONS: News reports are unique non-fiction texts. Being real, they naturally engage students, and with the range of topics that are covered, help to develop pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the wider world outside the classroom. The reports are ideal for short, focused comprehension or discussion activities. Along with the opportunity to find fascinating facts and appreciate the opinions of those involved, there is plenty to be inferred and deduced to understand in more depth what is being reported. Like authors, journalists play with language, so news ‘stories’ are rich nuggets of text to investigate and provide the opportunity for literacy programmes.

TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE: The teacher answers are intended to provide a guide to the reading skill each question is practising. Suggestions are given for a starting point for responses that students would be expected to give at the start of KS3. Further suggestions then give fuller, more developed responses that students will work towards by the end of KS3, in preparation for the non-fiction elements of GCSE English language.

Part A

A1. Who is Dr Grace Li?

READING SKILL — Find and explain information

Possible answer

Starting point

- Dr Grace Li is part of the Oxford University AstraZeneca vaccine team.

Development

- She is answering the questions about the COVID-19 vaccine study that began this week with children.

A2. The team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is doing a clinical trial to make sure that their vaccine works for children as well as it works for adults. How exactly is the trial going to work? Number the statements 1-4 to reflect Dr Li’s answer to this question.

READING SKILL — Find and explain information

Possible answer

Expected response

We’re going to start off by enrolling teenagers aged between 12 and 17.	• 3
One is here in Oxford, the other three are in Bristol, Southampton and St George’s in London.	• 2
We’re going to recruit 300 children between six and 17, based at four different centres.	• 1
After that, we’re going to recruit younger children aged between 6 and 11.	• 4

A3. Decide whether the statements are true or false. If false, please provide the correction.

READING SKILL — Find and explain information

Possible answer

Starting point — some information correctly identified as true or false

Developed response — information correctly identified as true or false and the correction provided if applicable.

STATEMENT	TRUE OR FALSE	CORRECTION (if applicable)
The clinical trial at the moment is meant to be running over approximately a year.	• True	
Blood tests will be taken from children over the next six months or so.	• False	• Blood tests will be taken from children over the next 12 months or so.
Initially, the team behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine had not planned to do a trial on children.	• False	• The vaccine trial that’s taking place now was planned initially when the adult trials started 12 months ago.
At the moment, there aren’t any concerns about vaccine supply.	• False	• At the moment, vaccine supply is one of the biggest stumbling blocks to recovering from this pandemic.
The team are actively encouraging children from BAME backgrounds to be recruited into the study so that a diverse population will be tested.	• True	

A4. In the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, who mostly got admitted to hospital?

READING SKILL — Find and explain information

Possible answer**Expected response**

- In the first wave, the people who got admitted to hospital were mostly grandparents and older people who got really sick.

A5. How is safety going to be monitored in the study?

READING SKILL — Find and explain information

Possible answer**Starting point**

- Those involved are watched very carefully and asked to put into a diary any side effects they might have from the vaccine.

Development

- Regular discussions take place and if there are any worries then there would be consideration of whether to continue the study.

Part B**B1. Most children don't get very ill from coronavirus so why is a vaccine trial for children necessary?**

READING SKILL — Infer information and justify with evidence from the text

Possible answer**Starting point**

- A vaccine trial for children is necessary because although most children don't get very ill from coronavirus, some children, mostly those with pre-existing medical conditions, do get very sick and have to be admitted to children's intensive care. Even if the majority of children won't need to be vaccinated, this trial is needed to establish whether it is safe and effective to use vaccines to protect very vulnerable children from coronavirus.

Development

- Furthermore, there is still a lot to learn about how coronavirus affects adults and children. There is much uncertainty about the long-term effects of COVID on human health. There are also lots of things that we don't know about how coronavirus spreads. For example, it may be advisable for more children to have the vaccine if it is discovered that having it stops children from spreading the virus.

B2. What makes Dr Li and her team "really confident that actually there will be almost no safety concerns" in their vaccine trial with children?

READING SKILL — Infer information and justify with evidence from the text

Possible answer**Starting point**

- Dr Li and her team are confident about the safety of the trial for the children involved because they already have lots of safety data from the adult trials.

Development

- They've got safety data from 25,000 adults in the UK, Brazil and South Africa. This is a large sample. Therefore, since this data shows that the vaccine is really safe and works well in adults, the team are confident that there won't be significant safety concerns in the trial with children.

B3. Suggest why the team are going to start enrolling older children and teenagers first.

READING SKILL — Infer information based on own knowledge

Possible answer**Starting point**

- It is likely that the team are going to start enrolling older children and teenagers first as there is some evidence to suggest that they are more likely to catch and transmit the virus than younger children. This may be because teenagers tend to have more independence and social contacts.

Development

- Furthermore, it will probably be easier for researchers to get the information that they need from older children and teenagers. This age group are less likely to be concerned by regular blood tests than younger children. They are also more likely to be able to describe any symptoms and to complete the diary detailing any side effects.

B4. Why doesn't Dr Li give a date for when children above the age of five will be able to get vaccinated?

READING SKILL — Infer information and justify with evidence from the text

Possible answer**Starting point**

- Dr Li doesn't say when children above the age of five will be able to get vaccinated because she doesn't know.

Development

- The vaccine study with children has only just started and it is meant to run for a year. However, this could change as it did with the adult trial. Sometimes you can get some results early, which might mean that the vaccine could be approved for use in children before the end of the trial. However, it still isn't known whether the vaccine will be offered to all children over five even if it does prove to be safe and effective. Therefore, there are too many uncertainties for Dr Li to be able to answer the question specifically.

B5. Why have some people been sent swabs through the post regardless of whether they have symptoms?

READING SKILL — Infer information and justify with evidence from the text

Possible answer**Starting point**

- Some people have been sent swabs through the post regardless of whether they have symptoms to help researchers to establish how many people have COVID but don't have any symptoms.

Development

- The tests are being sent out all around the country and they are testing different ages and different symptoms so it's a huge study. They are trying to work out exactly what transmission looks like, and they also need to work out whether having the vaccine will stop people spreading the virus. The answers to these questions are needed so that people can start living their normal lives again.

Part C**C1. Comment on the use of the question mark in the headline.**

READING SKILL — Identify benefits of text organisation and presentation

Possible answer**Starting point**

- The use of the question mark in the headline is intriguing because it shows that there are still a lot of questions to be answered concerning COVID vaccines for children. This helps to hook the reader to find out more.

Development

- It could also be viewed as a rhetorical question to make readers think about their own feelings about giving children a COVID vaccine and the use of a clinical trial involving children.

C2. Suggest why an interview format involving a panel of young people was used for this report.

READING SKILL — Identify benefits of text organisation and presentation

Possible answer**Starting point**

- The interview format is used for this report to reflect the fact that *FYI* presenter Tilly Lockey interviewed Dr Li with a panel of young people.

Development

- The use of the question and answer format in the article makes the information more accessible. This is because the questions have come from young people so *First News*' young readers are likely to be able to relate to them and want to know the answers too. The issue of COVID vaccines for children is very complicated so this format makes it seem less intimidating as it shows that there are lots of questions about it and that some of them can't be answered fully yet.

C3. If you had the opportunity to ask Dr Li a question about COVID vaccines for children, what would you ask and why?

READING SKILL — Ask questions to help understanding

Possible answer**Starting point**

- Would you be willing to let a child related to you take part in the clinical trial?

Development

- I would ask this question because I think it could help to reassure people about the safety of the trial. People tend to be very protective of their own relatives. Therefore, if a scientist is willing to let their own loved one take part then it shows that they are happy to lead the way because they are confident it is safe and they have a real belief in the value of what they are doing.

(Award all questions as long as the reason for the question is clearly explained.)