

Letter to the Editor

COVID-19 Vaccination in Algeria: The Starting Race

 **Mohamed Lounis**

Department of Agro-Veterinary Science, Faculty of Natural and Life Sciences, University of Ziane Achour, Djelfa, Algeria

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The viral respiratory disease caused by coronavirus called COVID-19 is still spreading through all countries around the world. As of August 31, 2021 the total account has reached 217 million cases and 4.5 million deaths.^[1] To face this situation countries are in a race to find the most effective measure to stop or reduce its spreading. From the total and partial confinement, social distancing and border closing to vaccination, each country is adapting these measures according to its capacities.

Algeria is the largest African country with a total population of 44.8 millions. The country has reported its first COVID-19 cases in February 25th 2020. It accounts currently, 195,162 cases and 4,209 deaths which class it in the top nine most affected countries. The number of real cases is however higher due to the low number of realized tests.^[1]

After multiple preventive measures which have allowed a relative control of the disease in the first months,^[2] the last wave of COVID-19 (Fig. 1) have made these measures under discussion pushing the national authorities to review their strategies by prioritizing the vaccination option.

In fact, after an hesitancy period from January 31, 2021 where the vaccination were lunched with only 724,812 persons 2 doses vaccinated in 8 months, Algeria switched to a higher gear in the last months.^[3] The Government has started a range of measures to accelerate the vaccination campaign.

The first step was to insure the availability of vaccine. For this reason, the Government has committed 20 billion Al-

gerian Dinars (120 millions €) for this campaign. Also, the it ordered 17 million doses of the Sinovac vaccines at the rate of 5 million doses per month. In parallel, a convention with the Chinese part allows Algeria to manufacture the coronavirus vaccine Sinovac locally from September 2021 with a capacity of 2.5 million doses per month. Before, the government has also concluded a convention to manufacture the Sputnik-V vaccine by the most important pharmaceutical company "Saidal" of the country4. The total number acquired until now is about 10 million doses including Sinovac, Sputnik-V and 1 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.^[4] Also, 600,000 of the Moderna vaccine were also sent by the USA of America. Reserved

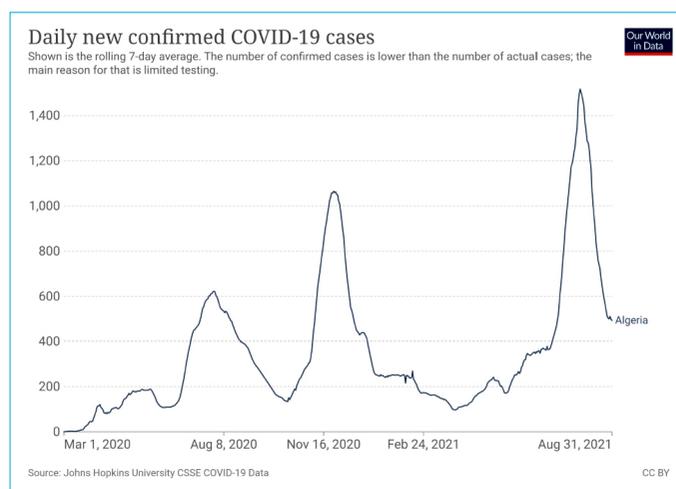


Figure 1. COVID-19 evolution in Algeria.

Address for correspondence: Mohamed Lounis, MD. Department of Agro-Veterinary Science, Faculty of Natural and Life Sciences, University of Ziane Achour, BP 3117, Road of Moudjbara, Djelfa 17000, Algeria

Phone: +(213)554258371 **E-mail:** lounisvet@gmail.com

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priority for healthcare workers and susceptible persons of more than 50 years, the vaccine is now addressed to all citizens of more than 18 years and will even generalize it for those under this age.^[5]

In order to succeed this campaign, Algeria has employed all its means to encourage the population to get vaccinated. One of its main assets is its experience in vaccination against infectious diseases where it occupies a respectable place in Africa with a vaccination coverage of 90%. TVs and radios spotlights and social media were also used to sensitize the population. To facilitate the vaccination operation, a platform was first created to find out vaccination appointments and about 8 000 sanitary centers were reserved for this purpose. Also, vaccination campaign were organized in mosques especially in the collective prayer of Friday and sport and cultural buildings. These measures have allowed a vaccination of about 672,724 persons in three days.^[4] In addition private pharmacist will also be approved to vaccinate in order to accelerate this campaign. At last vaccination in schools and universities and some administrative building will be mandatory for all students and teachers. All these measures seem to be a

good signs in the vaccination road and the battle against COVID-19 in Algeria.

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