

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine safe in older Koreans

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine [BNT162b2; tozinameran] is generally well tolerated in elderly Koreans, according to findings of a study published in the *Journal of Korean Medical Science*.

The safety of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was investigated in 2123 adults 75 years of age and over who received their dose at the COVID-19 central vaccination centre in Seoul, South Korea, on 5–23 April 2021 and their second dose between 26 April and 14 May 2021. Patients were observed for 15–30 min post-dose for immediate (acute) adverse reactions, and telephone interviews were conducted in a random sample of 638 patients 7 days post-dose. Additional adverse event (AE) data were collected from the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) COVID-19 vaccine adverse event following immunization (AEFI) surveillance system.

The rate of acute adverse reactions was 8.5 cases per 1000 doses, but none of these reactions were considered to be acute vaccine-related allergic reactions.

The overall adverse reaction rate within 7 days post-dose was 82%. Local reactions were reported in 50% and 45% of patients after the first and second dose, respectively, and systemic reactions were reported in 15% and 26%, respectively.

The rate of medically attended AEs reported to the KDCA AEFI surveillance system was 5.4 cases per 1000 doses. The most frequently reported AEs were generalised weakness (26%), dizziness (26%), muscle pain (22%), headache (13%), fever (13%), and exanthema or urticaria (13%). Five serious AEs were reported but most were not vaccine-related.

"In conclusion, the BNT162b2 vaccination was safe and tolerable in the adults aged ≥ 75 years," said the authors.