

PHARMA

JPM23: Pfizer, Moderna and more look to combine COVID and flu vaccine markets

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Moderna

Pfizer

GSK



Along with big COVID names Moderna and Pfizer, GSK is also angling to carve a space in the flu and COVID combination market. (solarseven/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

When Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna swooped in to save the day with pandemic mRNA vaccines, few people—if any—were thinking about the long-term structure of the COVID-19 vaccine market. Now, as vaccination rates decline and government contracts dry up, that future is becoming clearer.

While COVID-19 took a back seat to other topics during this year's J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference, several companies still took time to speculate about the future.

Notably, the top players are aiming to combine their coronavirus vaccines with annual flu shots and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) immunizations. In addition, execs at several vaccine companies said they expect the COVID-19 shot market to gradually shift to something like the flu vaccine business.

During Moderna's presentation at JPM, CEO Stéphane Bancel called the flu market "a pretty good model" for where things will end up. If that comes to fruition, the company plans to update its Spikevax boosters regularly and potentially adjust the vaccines by geography.

Aside from using the flu market as a model, Bancel [told \(https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-09/moderna-s-bancel-prepares-for-transition-year-as-covid-shot-sales-wane?sref=XGjS8839\)](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-09/moderna-s-bancel-prepares-for-transition-year-as-covid-shot-sales-wane?sref=XGjS8839) Bloomberg that Moderna could introduce a combination flu and COVID product as soon as next year. The company could introduce a triple combination shot with the RSV component by 2025 at the earliest, he added.

Moderna isn't the only company eyeing combination vaccines. GSK, which recently won a European nod (<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/sanofi-and-gsk-crash-covid-19-vaccine-late-world-first-nod-next-gen-booster-vidprevty-beta>) for its Sanofi-partnered booster, is also angling for space in the combination market. While analysts were skeptical about recent phase 1 data (<https://www.fiercebiotech.com/biotech/curevac-half-baked-covid-flu-data-release-questioned-analysts-shares-still-rally-17>) from GSK and CureVac's modified COVID and flu shots, the company sees "real interest" in a COVID-flu combination shot, GSK's chief commercial officer Luke Miels told Fierce Pharma during an interview at JPM.

People would rather have one vaccine than two, Miels said, predicting that if the combo vaccines are successful in testing, the whole COVID market and "a large part" of the flu market would move to the combo. But to do that, the shot's COVID component would need to be "as good or better than current options," he added.

Speaking of the current options, Pfizer has combo goals as well. The company's BioNTech-partnered COVID-flu mRNA shot could launch in 2024 or later, according to a company [presentation \(https://s28.q4cdn.com/781576035/files/doc_downloads/2023/01/PFE-Fireside-Chat-Slides-\(01.09.23\).pdf\)](https://s28.q4cdn.com/781576035/files/doc_downloads/2023/01/PFE-Fireside-Chat-Slides-(01.09.23).pdf) at JPM.

Before then, government-funded vaccine contracts are expected to run out in the U.S., ushering in a private market sometime this year. In that setting, Novavax believes it can succeed with its adjuvanted, protein-based shot, which hasn't gained significant traction after its FDA authorization last July. At JPM, Novavax's chief commercial officer and chief business officer John Trizzino said his company should have more opportunity to win business under "normal" commercial contracting procedures.

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