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Novavax's Ebola vaccine is in hot pursuit of GSK, Merck, J&J candidates

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Novavax ([\\$NVAX](#)) announced on Thursday that it would take its [Ebola](#) candidate to Australia for a Phase I trial involving 230 healthy adults. It is the fourth company to bring an Ebola vaccine to human trials--behind Big Pharmas GlaxoSmithKline ([\\$GSK](#)), Merck ([\\$MRK](#)) and Johnson & Johnson ([\\$JNJ](#))--but Novavax isn't worried. Novavax's R&D chief, Dr. Greg Glenn, says it has a better vaccine.

"The need for an Ebola vaccine is not going to go away. ... I think there's going to be a need for a very good vaccine. I think this vaccine is really a high-quality construct and we intend to see it developed," Glenn told *FierceVaccines*.

The Ebola GP vaccine is named so because it's a glycoprotein (GP) recombinant nanoparticle jab. This differentiates it from the other candidates in development, which are all vector-based.

In vector-based vaccines, there can be a mismatch between the strain that is causing the disease and the predicted strain used to make the vaccine, like in this year's flu shot, Glenn said.

The other vaccines that have been deployed in the field "have been matched to old strains of Ebola," he said. What's different about Novavax's vaccine is that the gene sequence it uses is matched to the sequence of the strain that is causing the current epidemic.

The immunity induced by the Ebola GP vaccine is "more robust" than that offered by vaccines being deployed in the field, Glenn said. In a nonhuman primate challenge, the vaccine provoked the creation of "high-quality antibodies" and lots of them. It also requires a very low dose due to its adjuvant, Matrix-M.

The smaller dose, coupled with Novavax's capacity to produce millions of doses each month, could make it a key player in the Ebola vaccine arena. Early data from Glaxo's trial suggest that a single dose of its candidate may not trigger an immune response strong enough to fend off Ebola.

"[Novavax's] goal is to accelerate the development of this vaccine through funding collaborations with any one of a number of global healthcare entities or U.S. governmental entities," said Barclay "Buck" Phillips, Novavax chief financial officer.



*Dr. Greg Glenn, Novavax
SVP of R&D*

Results from the trial are expected in mid-2015.

- here's the [release](#)

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