

# FiercePharma

## Altimune wins \$120M BARDA contract to advance nasal spray anthrax vaccine

by [Eric Sagonowsky](#) |  
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*A photomicrograph of Bacillus anthracis bacteria--Courtesy of CDC*

Gaithersburg, MD's Altimune has secured a sizable contract with BARDA to further develop its nasal spray anthrax vaccine candidate, building on an existing collaboration as the biotech prepares to move into clinical trials.

Potentially worth \$120.2 million, the deal will pave the way for Altimune to test its NasoShield in Phase I with a \$14.3 million tranche. Total options for the 5-year deal amount to \$105.9 million, possibly covering Phase Ib and II tests plus other manufacturing and regulatory efforts for a vaccine that's previously been supported by BARDA.

In a head-to-head animal study, Altimune said its candidate provided protection from anthrax infection with a single dose and proved to be no worse than multiple doses of the only approved anthrax vaccine, BioThrax, made by Rockville, MD's Emergent BioSolutions.

Though Emergent's existing anthrax vaccine is stockpiled to protect against attacks, side effects and dosing schedule concerns have created a desire for a better product. To that end, last March BARDA inked a \$31 million development agreement to test NuThrax--which is heat-stable and only needs two doses--in Phase III. The NIH and Department of Defense previously supported Phase I and Phase II development for the vaccine.

Altimune's contract comes just weeks after Emergent BioSolutions indicated it might reduce its headcount in Lansing, MI, where it produces BioThrax. The company's current supply contract expires at the end of September and a new deal is under negotiation, a spokesperson told the *Lansing State Journal*. It's additionally awaiting FDA approval to produce BioThrax at a plant that needs fewer workers.

Also working to advance an anthrax vaccine candidate is San Diego's Pfenex, which secured a \$143.5 million BARDA deal last August to develop Px563L. That collaboration will initially fund a Phase Ia study with options for further studies and work on manufacturing processes.