WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. ~~An~~ A pharmaceutical composition comprising therapeutically effective amount of an inactivated varicella zoster virus (VZV) and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, wherein the VZV is inactivated by 5-25 kGy of gamma irradiation and wherein the infectivity of the VZV is ~~undetectable~~ ≤0.040 plaque-forming units (PFU's)/mL and wherein the inactivated VZV induces an immune response against VZV when administered to a patient.

~~2. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a therapeutically effective amount of the VZV of claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier~~

~~3. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 2, wherein the infectivity of the inactivated VZV is ≤0.040 plaque-forming units (PFU's)/mL.~~

42. The pharmaceutical composition of claim ~~3~~1, wherein the infectivity of the inactivated VZV is ≤0.010 plaque-forming units (PFU's)/mL

~~5~~3. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 42, wherein the infectivity of the inactivated VZV is ≤0.002 plaque-forming units (PFU's)/mL

~~6~~4. The pharmaceutical composition of any of claims 2-~~5~~3, wherein the VZV strain is an Oka strain or an Oka strain derivative.

~~7~~5. The pharmaceutical composition of claim ~~6~~4, wherein the composition is lyophilized.

~~8. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 7, wherein the VZV is inactivated by gamma irradiation.~~

~~9~~6. The pharmaceutical composition of claim ~~8~~1, wherein the immune response elicited by the composition ~~is not significantly different than~~differs from the immune response elicited by the control sample by 50% or less from the immune response elicited by a control sample comprising the same amount of the VZV that has not been inactivated.

~~10~~7. The pharmaceutical composition of claim ~~9~~6, wherein the immune response elicited by the inactivated VZV differs from the immune response elicited by the control sample by 25% or less.

~~11~~8. The pharmaceutical composition of any of claims 2-~~5~~3, wherein the infectivity of the VZV is determined by a varicella plaque assay.

~~12~~9. A method of preparing an inactivated varicella zoster virus (VZV) comprising gamma irradiating a sample comprising a VZV using from ~~about~~ 5 to ~~about 50~~ 25 kGy of gamma radiation.

~~13~~10. The method of claim ~~12~~9, wherein the gamma radiation is provided to the sample by exposing the sample to ^{60}Co rays.

~~14~~11. The method of claim ~~13~~10, wherein the VZV is the Oka strain or an Oka strain derivative.

~~15~~12. The method of claim ~~13~~10, wherein the sample is lyophilized prior to being irradiated.

~~16. The method of claim 14 or claim 15, wherein the amount of gamma radiation used is about 25 kGy or less.~~

~~17~~13. The method of claim ~~16~~9, wherein the vaccine is a liquid bulk formulation and the amount of gamma radiation used is ~~from~~ about 5 kGy to ~~about~~ 12.5 kGy.

~~18~~14. The method of claim ~~15~~9, wherein the amount of gamma radiation used is from ~~about~~10 kGy to ~~about~~ 25 kGy.

~~19~~15. An inactivated VZV produced or obtainable by the method of any of claims ~~12~~9-~~18~~14.

~~20~~16. A vaccine comprising a therapeutically effective amount of the inactivated VZV of claim ~~19~~ 15 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

~~21~~17. ~~A pharmaceutical composition which comprises a therapeutically effective amount~~Use of an inactivated varicella zoster virus (VZV) for the manufacture of medicament for the treatment of herps zoster in a subject~~and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier~~, wherein the VZV is inactivated with 5-25 kGy of gamma irradiation~~, for use in treating herpes zoster in a subject~~.

~~22. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 21, wherein the pharmaceutical composition is formulated for subcutaneous or intramuscular administration.~~

~~23. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 22, wherein the subject is 50 years of age or older.~~

~~24. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 22 or 23, wherein the subject is immunocompromised.~~

~~25. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 24, wherein the subject has at least one condition selected from the group consisting of: suffering from a hematologic malignancy, undergoing an immunosuppressive therapy, received a hematopoietic stem cell transplant, received a solid organ transplant, infected with HIV, and suffering from an autoimmune disease.~~

~~26. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 22 or 23, wherein one or more doses of the pharmaceutical composition is administered to the subject after a predetermined amount of time has passed.~~