

IFPMA Covid-19 Update - 2 April

Top news:

- Merck, Pfizer and Eli Lilly announced medical service volunteer programs to enable employees who are licensed medical professionals to aid in the fight against COVID-19 while maintaining their base pay. Bayer expands production capacities for its malaria drug Resochin after indications that the drug could slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus and therefore lead to a milder course of the disease.
- China rejected the American intelligence community's conclusion that Beijing concealed the extent of the coronavirus epidemic, and accused the U.S. of seeking to shift the blame for its own handling of the outbreak.
- Two months ago, the WHO issued the first Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, with an initial ask of \$675 million for the first three months of the response. As of yesterday, \$677 million has been pledged or received.
- WHO EURO launched the COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor (HSRM) – a new online platform to provide evidence of how national health systems are responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A group of G-20 leaders are preparing an international response to the impact of the coronavirus crisis in Africa that would include debt relief and financial aid, African officials and European diplomats said.

VACCINE/ TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT

IFPMA members

- **Handelsblatt:** [Bayer equips Plants for Malaria Drug That Could Help Fight Covid-19](#) Malaria drug Resochin drug could slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus and therefore lead to a milder course of the disease. Bayer is expanding production capacities while advising that clinical studies would be necessary to clarify the risk-benefit ratio of the drug but the company's production plants in Europe would be adjusted to produce it.
- **Wall Street Journal:** [Biotech Pioneer Amgen Joins Hunt for Coronavirus Drug](#). Big biotech company Amgen Inc. is joining the race to discover new drugs that can treat the novel coronavirus, the latest drugmaker redirecting resources toward the pandemic.
- **Fierce Pharma:** [The White House is pushing FDA to clear Fujifilm's Avigan for COVID-19. Should the agency obey?](#) The White House has picked another drug, Fujifilm's flu antiviral Avigan (favipiravir), as a possible coronavirus treatment—and it's pressuring the FDA to allow use of the yet-unapproved therapy during the pandemic.

Others

- **BBC News:** [Coronavirus: Australian scientists begin tests of potential vaccines](#). The vaccines, made by Oxford University and US company Inovio Pharmaceutical, have been cleared for animal testing by the WHO. Australia's national science agency will assess if the vaccines work, and if they would be safe for humans.
- **New York Times:** [Unproven Stem Cell Therapy Gets OK for Testing in Coronavirus Patient](#). An experimental stem cell therapy derived from human placentas will begin early testing in patients with the coronavirus, a New Jersey biotech company said Thursday. The treatment

by the company Celularity, has not yet been used on any patients with Covid-19, but it has caught the attention of Rudy Giuliani, President Trump's personal lawyer.

- **South China Morning Post:** [Chinese military scientists hope to test coronavirus vaccine abroad](#). Military scientists have been working on a vaccine and the results of the first-stage clinical trials will be announced later this month. China hopes to further test the possible Covid-19 vaccine abroad as scientists look to carry out large-scale trials to test its effectiveness.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- **The Guardian:** [Opinion - The race to find a coronavirus treatment has one major obstacle: big pharma](#). Prof Ara Darzi (director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London; former Labour health minister) argues that while AI companies and scientists are cooperating, pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to grant them access to data on potential candidate treatments that they hold. It was the open sharing of data around the world that allowed scientists to map the genome of the SARS-CoV-2 virus at unprecedented speed. He argues that all pharmaceutical companies need to set aside their individual commercial ambitions and join a similar collective effort to identify, test, develop and manufacture treatments to curb the disease.

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

- **Statement:** [Medical Professionals Across Merck & Co., Inc., Pfizer Inc., and Eli Lilly and Company Activate to Support Health Systems, First Responders and Patients Amid COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Merck, Pfizer and Eli Lilly announced medical service volunteer programs to enable employees who are licensed medical professionals to aid in the fight against COVID-19 while maintaining their base pay.
 - In the U.S., **Merck** intends to collaborate with The Health Management Academy to identify facilities with the greatest need and triage potential qualifying volunteers to serve.
 - **Pfizer** has created a new Global COVID-19 Medical Service Program that empowers medical colleagues to provide diagnostic, treatment, and public health support in the battle against COVID-19.
 - **Eli Lilly** is deploying its medical professionals to staff a free drive-through COVID-19 testing facility at its corporate headquarters in Indianapolis.

GLOBAL RESPONSE

- **The Guardian:** [Opinion - UN secretary general: recovery from the coronavirus crisis must lead to a better world](#). António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, argues that we simply cannot return to where we were before Covid-19 struck. The pandemic has reminded us, in the starkest way possible, of the price we pay for weaknesses in health systems, social protections and public services. *Now is the time to redouble our efforts to build more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. The recovery must lead to a different economy. Our roadmap remains the 2030 agenda and sustainable development goals.*
- **Politico EU:** [EU aims to 'intensify' negotiations with US to fight coronavirus](#). The EU is seeking to breathe new life into negotiations on a regulatory deal with Washington, by stressing that such a deal could help fight the coronavirus pandemic. Under such an agreement, the EU and U.S. would agree to set standards jointly on future technologies, including

pharmaceuticals, as well as streamline approvals of machines, medical devices and other products in each other's markets.

- **The Strait Times:** [Coronavirus: France urges debt freeze for poor countries hit by pandemic](#). French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire on Thursday (April 2) called for a US\$500 billion (S\$717.24 billion) war chest and debt moratorium for developing countries, especially in Africa, to help them cope with the coronavirus crisis.
- **Politico:** [G-20 prepares coronavirus rescue package for Africa](#). A group of G-20 leaders are preparing an international response to the impact of the coronavirus crisis in Africa that would include debt relief and financial aid, African officials and European diplomats said.

ACCESS/ SUPPLY OF MEDICINES

- **EU Observer:** [EU fighting shortages and faulty medical supplies](#). The EU Commission announced new "control material" that will allow laboratories to check the correct functioning of coronavirus testing kits and avoid false negatives, after a series of reports about faulty rapid tests from China. EU countries have reported shortages of ventilators, personal protective equipment and testing kits - especially in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and France where there are very high coronavirus patient loads requiring intensive care.

PANDEMIC DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Guardian:** [Global coronavirus infections near million mark after 'near exponential growth'](#). Confirmed Covid-19 infections are nearing the one million mark after "near exponential growth" saw global cases more than double in the past week.
- **Bloomberg:** [China Rejects U.S. Intelligence Claim It Hid Virus Numbers](#). China rejected the American intelligence community's conclusion that Beijing concealed the extent of the coronavirus epidemic, and accused the U.S. of seeking to shift the blame for its own handling of the outbreak.

COVID-19: FOCUS ON AFRICA

- **WHO AFRO:** [COVID-19 - Situation report](#). 6,075 cases on the African continent, with 214 deaths and 478 recoveries reported.
 - The exponential growth of this outbreak in the WHO African Region is of grave concern considering that the public health ecosystem of many of the affected countries is characterized by fragile health systems and a high prevalence of HIV, malnutrition and other comorbidities which can increase the severity of COVID-19 and represent an additional strain on the health system.
 - It is essential that African governments continue to promote strict adherence to proven public health measures such as social distancing, good personal hygiene practices and cough etiquette. In countries with no reported confirmed cases, preparedness and readiness activities should be scaled up and closely monitored.
 - [COVID-19 in Africa: watch a joint media briefing with WHO and WEF](#) Though in most countries the numbers of patients requiring them are still small, Dr Moeti predicted that obtaining ventilators would become a challenge for Africa's health systems – especially having seen problems it has caused for stronger health systems around the world. [Questions from New York Times, AllAfrica.com, South African Mail](#)
- **CNBC:** [Lockdowns, curfews and doorstep testing: Africa's crackdown on the coronavirus](#). Experts are calling for a more coordinated continental response in order to avoid a profoundly damaging outbreak of the kind sweeping through Europe and the U.S. in recent weeks.

WHO – Daily COVID-19 update, 2 April

No media briefing by Dr. Tedros today; instead there was a [mission briefing](#):

- In the next day or two, we will reach more than 1 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, and 50,000 deaths.
- WHO, UNICEF and the International Federation of the Red Cross is calling for countries to provide free public hand hygiene stations in areas without access to water and sanitizer.
- Two months ago, we issued our first Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, with an initial ask of \$675 million for the first three months of the response. As of yesterday, I'm delighted to say that \$677 million has been pledged or received.

WHO EURO: Health System Response Monitor: new tool to analyse COVID-19 response measures across European countries launched.

- The [new website](#) will systematically map and analyse health system responses to the pandemic across the Region. It is a joint undertaking between the WHO EURO, the EU Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Being launched as a pilot with selected country data, HSRM will be updated regularly with information from all countries in the Region. It will offer cross-country comparisons for analyses of the measures being taken by national authorities and will also track wider public health initiatives.

In the wider IGO world:

- [New Leadership for a Global Crisis: COVID-19](#) - [@UN](#) Deputy Secretary-General [@AminaJMohammed](#) joins Unilever CEO [@alanjope](#) and [@Lise_Kingo](#) to discuss leadership in the age of [#COVID19](#) in a new UN [@globalcompact](#)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union - [How to run a parliament during a pandemic: Q and A](#)
- UNCTAD [COVID-19 requires gender-equal responses to save economies](#)
- World Bank blogs [Shore up global transport to defeat the COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) pandemic](#)