IFPMA Covid-19 Update -29 April

Top news:

- The 73rd WHA may be held on May 18, as a one-day virtual session, largely discussing the global COVID-19 pandemic, according to sources from Health Policy Watch.
- WHO will reconvene the Emergency Committee tomorrow to evaluate the evolution of the pandemic, and to advise on updated recommendations.
- European Union member states are holding daily online worldwide consultations with WHO member states with the hopes of concluding the EU draft resolution on COVID-19 in time for the WHA meeting.
- Almost half the global workforce – 1.6 billion people – are in "immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed" by the economic impact of Covid-19, the ILO warned.
- Gilead released positive statement on clinical trial results from the US, more info to follow
- A study among more than 200 COVID-19 patients in Wuhan found no positive effects of administering remdesivir compared with a control group of adults.
- Pfizer and BioNTech completed the dosing for the first cohort of their COVID-19 vaccine candidate in Germany & announced testing in the US to begin next week
- Novartis to conduct clinical trial to test effectiveness of canakinumab, an interleukin (IL)-1β blocker, for patients with COVID-19

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

- **Health Policy Watch:** WHO May Host Virtual World Health Assembly May 18 – COVID-19 To Be Main Agenda Item. The 73rd WHA may be held on May 18, as a one-day virtual session, devoted largely to debate the global COVID-19 pandemic. EU member states are hopeful that a draft WHA resolution to create a voluntary patent pool of new COVID-19 health technologies could be approved. They are holding daily online worldwide consultations with WHO member states with the hopes of concluding the resolution in time for the WHA meeting.
- **KEI:** KEI comments on the resolution WHA73: "Covid-19 Response" proposed by the European Union. KEI submitted their comments in response to the zero draft resolution WHA73: "Covid-19 Response" proposed by the EU. The proposed amendments and additional wordings include a new proposal to work with governments to create a fund to buy out global patent rights for essential patents for tests, drugs or vaccines for COVID 19.
- **TWN:** COVID-19: CSOs call for fair & equitable benefit sharing of medical products. Nearly 400 civil society organizations (CSOs) and individuals have called for the operationalization of fair and equitable benefit sharing arising from the sharing of SARS-CoV-2 digital sequence information and samples as recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

- **New York Times:** Stock Markets Edge Higher as U.S. Data Looms. Government data to be released on Wednesday will almost certainly show that the U.S. economy shrank in the first quarter at its fastest rate in a decade. But the numbers will hardly begin to reflect the economic damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic.
- **The Guardian:** Half of world's workers 'at immediate risk of losing livelihood due to coronavirus'. Of the total global working population of 3.3 billion, about 2 billion work in the "informal economy", often on short-term contracts or self-employment, and suffered

a 60% collapse in their wages in the first month of the crisis. Of these, 1.6 billion face losing their livelihoods, the ILO warned.

- **The Conversation:** Steps to inoculate African economies against the impact of coronavirus. Policymakers in Africa must now absorb lessons from the experiences of other countries and avoid policy mistakes. Most importantly they need to implement a COVID-19 policy manifesto that is capable of inoculating African economies from the crisis and reigniting economic activities after the pandemic.

SUPPLY & MANUFACTURING

- **WTV:** India's Serum Institute to make millions of potential coronavirus vaccine doses. While the Oxford vaccine, called "ChAdOx1 nCoV-19", is yet to be proven to work against COVID-19, Serum decided to start manufacturing it as it had shown success in animal trials and had progressed to tests on humans, Serum Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla said.
- **UNICEF:** COVID-19: Gavi and UNICEF to secure equipment and diagnostics for lower-income countries. Gavi urgently made US$ 40 million available to UNICEF to secure personal protective equipment, diagnostic tests and other vital supplies on behalf of 58 low and lower-middle-income countries.

VACCINE/ TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT & DONATIONS

IFPMA Members

- **Gilead:** Gilead Sciences Statement on Positive Data Emerging From National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Study of Investigational Antiviral Remdesivir for COVID-19. Gilead is aware of positive data emerging from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' (NIAID) study of the investigational antiviral remdesivir for the treatment of COVID-19. We understand that the trial has met its primary endpoint and that NIAID will provide detailed information at an upcoming briefing. Gilead will share additional remdesivir data from the company's open-label Phase 3 SIMPLE trial in patients with severe COVID-19 disease shortly.
- **Barrons**: Antiviral Remdesivir Showed 'No Significant Benefit' In Virus Patients. In a study among more than 200 COVID-19 patients in Wuhan, China, published in The Lancet, doctors found no positive effects of administering the drug compared with a control group of adults. The findings were released after Gilead said a separate large-scale trial with the drug had showed positive results.
- **Pfizer:** BioNTech and Pfizer announce completion of dosing for first cohort of Phase 1/2 trial of COVID-19 vaccine candidates in Germany. Twelve study participants were dosed with vaccine candidate BNT162 in Germany since dosing began on April 23, 2020. The trial is the first clinical trial of a COVID-19 vaccine candidate in Germany. Pfizer and BioNTech plan to initiate trials for BNT162 in the US upon regulatory approval, which is expected shortly.
- **Wall Street Journal:** Race for Coronavirus Vaccine Accelerates as Pfizer Says U.S. Testing to Begin Next Week. The race for a vaccine to combat the new coronavirus is moving faster than researchers and drugmakers expected, with Pfizer announced it will begin testing of its experimental vaccine in the U.S. as early as next week.
- **Novartis:** Novartis announces plan to initiate clinical trial of canakinumab for patients with COVID-19 pneumonia. The CAN-COVID trial will examine the efficacy of utilizing canakinumab, an interleukin (IL)-1β blocker, to treat a type of severe immune overreaction called cytokine release syndrome in people with COVID-19 pneumonia.

Novartis aims to rapidly enroll 450 patients at multiple medical centers across Europe and the US.

- **The Guardian:** Online demand for hydroxychloroquine surged 1,000% after Trump backed it, study finds. Despite the lack of evidence, the presidential endorsement drove up online searches for buying hydroxychloroquine, and its chemical cousin chloroquine, by 1,389% and 442% respectively.
- **STAT News:** Hospital demand for hydroxycholoroquine to treat Covid-19 patients is waning. The ongoing uncertainty over whether hydroxycholoroquine can successfully treat Covid-19 appears to have eroded demand considerably among hospitals. From the week ending April 17 to the week ending April 24, demand plunged 62% among hospitals placing orders for the decades-old malaria drug. The number of tablets sought fell to 198,500 from 462,850 during that stretch

Others

- **BBC News:** Coronavirus: Anti-viral drug has 'positive results' in lab tests. The Pneumagen team used the anti-viral drug Neumifil and Carbohydrate Binding Modules (mCBMs) to block the Sars-CoV-2 virus from getting into lung cells. Pneumagen chief executive Douglas Thomson said the positive results from three studies showed there was the potential to prevent and treat infection.
- **Daily Mail:** Fourth potential coronavirus vaccine starts clinical trials in China as officials aim to roll out first doses in autumn. The new vaccine candidate was developed by the Beijing branch of China National Biotec Group. The company said it would be able to produce 100 million doses of the vaccine once it's proven successful.
- **The Hill:** Elite group of scientists and billionaires form independent coronavirus research group. The group, aptly named Scientists to Stop COVID-19, describe themselves as "passionate citizen-scientists" who have developed "four actionable, non-partisan proposals to produce safe and effective COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines in the shortest possible timeframe," per a 17-page introductory document.
- **The Herald:** University of Glasgow awarded more than £1m for 'crucial' coronavirus research projects. Researchers at University of Glasgow will now be looking into key areas, which include treatment for the virus, underlying health conditions, secondary infections and the long terms effects of social distancing on the population.

DIAGNOSTICS

- **Nikkei:** China loosens coronavirus test kit export requirements. Since Sunday, China has no longer required COVID-19 test kits to be registered with and approved by the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) prior to export despite reports from various countries that some of China's medical exports were of faulty quality and unusable.
- **Nature**: Let Africa into the market for COVID-19 diagnostics. *Opinion by John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC*. Lack of access to diagnostics is Africa's Achilles heel. When SARS-CoV-2 was first reported, genome sequences were made available within weeks and Asia and Europe started producing in-house tests. Africa lacked this capacity and had to wait for the tests to be introduced, a tardy 'trickle-down' of diagnostics. The situation has now become worse: a race is on by the powerful to acquire whatever COVID-19 tests are available.

IMPACT ON GLOBAL HEALTH

- **STAT News:** Patients, drug makers grapple with how to continue cancer trials during the coronavirus. But some investigators and sponsors are trying to push ahead, tailoring ways

to keep patients enrolled while keeping them safe and to ensure the trial can still produce rigorous evidence of whether or not a drug works. "The problem that we all want to avoid is that despite our best efforts, the results from a given clinical trial will turn out to be so incomplete or unreliable as to make them uninterpretable," Pfizer chief medical officer Mace Rothenberg.

- **The Guardian**: Polio campaign in Africa put on hold during coronavirus. Vaccinations for up to 12 million children to prevent the spread of polio in Africa will be delayed, in a major redeployment of polio eradication resources to fight the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

FUNDING

- **Financial Times:** Letter: Funding a vaccine will require ingenuity. *From Amanda Glassman, Kalipso Chalkidou, Hannah Kettler, Rachel Silverman, Center for Global Development*. Companies will still absorb a large share of the commercial risk, potentially mitigated by early push funding from governments and donors. Governments need not set aside funds until a vaccine is developed and licensed, after which they pay a value-based price proportionate to wealth level and the extent to which their population would benefit from the vaccine. Further downward price negotiations would be possible to reflect early push funding, regulatory fast-track approval or public investment in filling capacity.

WHO – Daily COVID-19 update, 29 April

Statement by Dr Tedros here.

- As of tomorrow, it will be three months since I declared a public health emergency of international concern over the outbreak of novel coronavirus.
- In accordance with the International Health Regulations, I will reconvene the Emergency Committee tomorrow – because it's almost 3 months since we declared the highest emergency and that's what was suggested by the Emergency Committee – to evaluate the evolution of the pandemic, and to advise on updated recommendations.

WHO: Criteria for COVID-19 vaccine prioritization - Draft. The proposed attributed and criteria provides considerations for the assessment and prioritization of COVID-19 candidate vaccines to be considered for further development. The target audience includes vaccine scientists, product developers, manufacturers and funding agencies.

WHO: COVID 19 candidate treatments. This document provides a comprehensive overview of experimental treatments which are currently being explored for their effectiveness and safety for treating COVID-19.