

### Top news:

- UN General Assembly adopted a resolution, brought forward by the Mexican delegation, that calls for “equitable, efficient and timely” access to any future vaccines developed to fight coronavirus.
- Pharmaceutical chief executives leading efforts to tackle coronavirus have warned governments to step up co-ordination and provide substantial upfront funding if treatments, vaccines and testing are to be rolled out faster and fairly.
- Dr Tedros met with the EU ambassadors to the UN in Geneva today, President Macron calls the Pope again on relieving African debt; as Bill Gates is the focus of conspiracy theories. WIPO launches new search facility for PATENTSCOPE Database to support COVID-19 innovation efforts.
- Researchers at the University of Bern are hoping to be the first to produce a vaccine against Covid-19 and immunise the entire Swiss population in October.

### ACCESS & PRICING

- **The Hindu:** [UN member states demand ‘equitable’ access to future Covid-19 vaccines](#). The resolution, which was drafted by Mexico and received US support, calls for strengthening the “scientific international cooperation necessary to combat Covid-19 and to bolster coordination. The 193 members of the UN General Assembly on Monday adopted by consensus a resolution that calls for “equitable, efficient and timely” access to any future vaccines developed to fight coronavirus.
- **STAT News:** [Despite pricing controversies, pharma’s reputation is improving among patient groups](#). A survey carried out by Patient View, canvassed 1,850 patient groups from 95 countries between November 2019 and February 2020. They found that 46% of patient advocacy groups thought that brand-name drug companies had developed an “excellent” or “good” reputation last year, up from 41% in 2018. This was also the best showing for pharma since the survey was started in 2011.
- **Business Wire:** [Merck Broadens Patient Support and Assistance Programs as Part of Overall COVID-19 Relief Efforts](#). Merck will continue to ensure access to Merck medicines at no cost for eligible patients through its Merck Patient Assistance Program. Merck will also be making changes to other U.S. access and assistance programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a temporary \$0 co-pay for certain products for eligible privately insured patients who are enrolled in the Merck Access Program

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- **WIPO:** [WIPO launches new search facility for PATENTSCOPE Database to support COVID-19 innovation efforts](#). The WIPO COVID-19 search facility of PATENTSCOPE will provide scientists, engineers, public health policymakers, industry actors and members of the general public with an easily accessible source of intelligence for improving the detection, prevention, and treatment of diseases such as the novel coronavirus.
- **Financial Times:** [Coronavirus puts Big Pharma’s IP regime to the test](#). Pharmaceutical companies have responded rapidly to the need for treatments and a vaccine for the novel coronavirus. The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) says more than a third of its 1000 members are now working on. IP is not the limiting factor at this stage, says David

Loew, executive vice-president at Sanofi Pasteur. “Most vaccines don’t even have IP. In the end it’s a lot down to knowhow: how you produce them, workers, quality systems.”

## GLOBAL RESPONSE

- **Financial Times:** [Big Pharma calls for ‘billions’ in upfront coronavirus funding](#). Pharmaceutical chief executives leading efforts to tackle coronavirus have warned governments to step up co-ordination and provide substantial upfront funding if treatments, vaccines and testing are to be rolled out faster and fairly. Executives fear that without greater funding and scientific guidance on how to allocate supplies fairly, they will be unable to purchase sufficient raw materials, support production of existing medicines, and rapidly scale up their capacity to meet global demand. Seth Berkley, head of Gavi, the multilaterally-backed vaccines fund, said: “This is a global issue. We need an agreement on global access and manufacturing.”
- **L’OBS** [Macron talks this Tuesday with Pope Francis](#) – this is the second meeting between the two, where the talks are mainly about international solidarity, and “to reduce” or even “cancel” debt of African countries.

## GLOBAL ECONOMIC & SOCIAL IMPACT

- **The Guardian:** [Coronavirus is the biggest disaster for developing nations in our lifetime](#). The coronavirus pandemic has overwhelmed health systems in Europe and North America, but it’s going to be even worse in poor countries where medical resources are scarce. We’ve already seen that Covid-19 is no “great leveller”. Poorer people are at greater risk of catching the virus and are more likely to suffer the worst effects of an economic shock.
- **Brink News:** [How Badly Will the Coronavirus Impact Africa’s Economies?](#) With Europe and the United States — both major sources of development finance and remittances to Africa — now at the epicenter of the virus, its economic impact is expected to be worse than imagined at the beginning. The latest United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) predictions show that COVID-19 may reduce the continent’s expected economic growth from 3.2% to 1.8%.
- **Financial Times:** [Spain calls for €1.5tn EU recovery fund to ‘protect internal market’](#). Spain has urged EU leaders to approve up to €1.5tn in grants to rebuild the bloc’s pandemic-stricken economies and prevent the worst-hit countries from being undercut by better-off states.
- **The New York Times:** [28,000 Missing Deaths: Tracking the True Toll of the Coronavirus Crisis](#). At least 28,000 more people have died during the coronavirus pandemic over the last month than the official Covid-19 death counts report, a review of mortality data in 11 countries shows — providing a clearer, if still incomplete, picture of the toll of the crisis.

## VACCINE/ TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT/

### IFPMA Members

- **Forbes:** [Inside The Tiny Italian Biotech Startup Racing To Develop A Coronavirus Vaccine](#). Founded in 2009 by a group of biologists and researchers at the research and development arm of pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co, Takis Biotech is aiming for human trials of its DNA-based vaccine in the fall. Unlike more traditional vaccines, which use a weakened form of a virus and can take years to develop, Takis’ COVID-19 vaccine uses fragments of the virus’ DNA to induce an immune response against the coronavirus.

- **Al Jazeera:** [Can the tuberculosis vaccine help save coronavirus patients?](#) The BCG (bacillus Calmette-Guerin) vaccine is still routinely given in many countries, and there's evidence that it might protect against the novel coronavirus.

#### **Others**

- **Swiss Info:** [Swift Covid-19 vaccine within reach, say Swiss scientists.](#) A team of researchers at the University of Bern is hoping to be the first to produce a vaccine against Covid-19 and inoculate the entire Swiss population in October. The vaccine is unique because of the huge scalability. It has the ability to produce billions of doses in a short time frame," said Martin Bachmann, head of immunology at the Swiss university.
- **First Post:** [Three companies shortlisted to receive funding to develop Coronavirus vaccines from Department of Biotech.](#) In India, the Department of Biotechnology has so far short-listed three companies for funding the development of a vaccine for COVID-19. The department said, a multifaceted approach is being adopted to ensure that vaccine companies utilising different platforms and at different stages of development are fast-tracked through a research consortium under funding from the National Biopharma Mission.
- **Financial Times:** [Mutations map holds the key to bringing coronavirus under control.](#) Scientists studying mutations in coronavirus have decoded more than 10,000 different genomes of the deadly pathogen, creating a comprehensive map that will be crucial to controlling the pandemic and developing medicines to treat it.

#### **Ethics**

- **The New York Times:** [Coronavirus Is Forcing Medical Research to Speed Up.](#) For both experts and laypeople, being able to access dependable health advice has never felt more important, or challenging. However, some editors have also encouraged researchers to post their submissions to so-called preprint servers, where anyone can access them, before review. Checking sources is important: Heed information that comes from respected journals. But also remember that even the best peer-reviewed advice is likely to change — and change again. That is how science works, and now it's working faster than ever.
- **FastCompany:** [Why Bill Gates is the focus of the latest coronavirus conspiracy theories](#) Misinformation about the Microsoft founder and billionaire philanthropist is swirling around online as part of an effort to push an anti-vaccination agenda.

#### **CLINICAL TRIALS**

- **The Guardian:** [UK to trial coronavirus treatments using blood from survivors.](#) Health officials have prioritised two clinical trials that will be supplied with blood from recovered Covid-19 patients in the hope that transfusions can help save the lives of people hospitalised with the infection. The limited supply of convalescent plasma will be given to patients enrolled on sub-studies in the Recovery trial led by Peter Horby at the University of Oxford, and the Remap-Cap trial led by the Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre (ICNARC) in London.
- **Brisbane Times:** [Queensland to join trial of virus drugs but state needs more patients.](#) Queensland will trial two of the major drug candidates to treat COVID-19 when it gets enough patients to do so. A major national clinical trial will look at two drugs - hydroxychloroquine, and lopinavir-ritonavir - to see how effective they are in treating COVID-19.
- **Live Science:** ['At home' study will test if common drug can prevent serious COVID-19 complications.](#) An international study will test whether a common anti-inflammatory drug

can ward off serious complications from COVID-19 and possibly prevent patients from ending up in the hospital. The study, which would involve 6,000 participants in the U.S., Canada and Europe, is designed to be "contactless" — participants will receive the drug, called colchicine, by mail, and will be monitored by phone or video visits.

- **Russian News Agency:** [Russian coronavirus vaccine to undergo preclinical tests on people aged between 18 and 60](#). Russia's Vector State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology General, General Rinat Maksyutov said that preclinical tests will begin in early May and last until June 22. The vaccine has already been tested on animals.
- **Times of Israel:** [33 sick Israelis treated with antibodies from recovered COVID-19 patients](#). Antibodies from recovered COVID-19 patients have been given to 33 Israelis battling the virus and outcomes give cause for hope, according to the head of the national blood service. But Shinar, director of Magen David Adom blood services, stressed that the numbers are small and there is no control group, meaning there is no scientific way of knowing whether the antibodies are responsible for improvements.
- **Live Mint:** [Plasma therapy: Do we finally have treatment for coronavirus disease?](#) Although Convalescent Plasma Therapy is an experimental procedure for COVID-19 patients, The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has recently allowed states to start clinical trials of plasma therapy.

#### DISEASE CHARACTERISTICS

- **The Guardian:** [WHO warns that few have developed antibodies to Covid-19](#). Only a tiny proportion of the global population – maybe as few as 2% or 3% – appear to have antibodies in the blood showing they have been infected with Covid-19, according to the WHO. A finding that bodes ill for hopes that herd immunity will ease the exit from lockdown.
- **The New York Times:** [The Infection That's Silently Killing Coronavirus Patients](#). Dr Richard Levitan, an emergency doctor writes that hospitals should start screening with COVID-Pneumonia as it is resulting in a lot of deaths. When Covid pneumonia first strikes, patients don't feel short of breath, even as their oxygen levels fall. And by the time they do, they have alarmingly low oxygen levels and moderate-to-severe pneumonia (as seen on chest X-rays). Dr Levitan writes that the burden on health systems can be reduced if COVID-Pneumonia is identified and tested for earlier.

#### WHO – Daily COVID-19 update, 21 April

No media briefing by WHO today

Dr Tedros [met](#) the with the EU ambassadors to the UN in Geneva today: *"Very constructive and positive meeting with European Union ambassadors to the @UNGeneva today. Thank you for your strong, steadfast support for @WHO, including our key role coordinating the urgent global fight against #COVID19 and providing technical expertise to governments."*