

IFPMA Covid-19 Update - 30 March

Top news:

- J&J announced a lead vaccine candidate for COVID-19, the expansion of its existing partnership with the US Department of Health & Human Services, and a [\\$50 Million commitment](#) to support frontline health workers battling Covid-19
- Roche's stroke drug Activase has been added to the mix of existing treatments which could be effective in treating COVID-19
- Gilead will expand access to remdesivir by streamlining its approach and allow physicians and hospitals to apply for emergency use for multiple patients at once.
- United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres says he fears "millions and millions" of coronavirus cases in Africa and high mortality rates. He called on wealthy countries to help the developing world, for their own sake, as Oxfam calls for \$160 billion Global Public Health Plan and Emergency Response for the poorest countries; which will ensure that vaccines and treatments, when ready, are rapidly available to everyone – for free.
- WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan has so far received more than \$622 million. WHO has urged countries to safeguard the free movement of vital medicine and equipment as global health systems buckle under the pressure of tackling coronavirus.

VACCINE/ TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT

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- **J&J:** [Announces a Lead Vaccine Candidate for COVID-19; Landmark New Partnership with U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; and Commitment to Supply One Billion Vaccines Worldwide for Emergency Pandemic Use.](#)
- **Roche:** [Experts float Roche stroke drug Activase as potential COVID-19 therapy.](#) In an article in the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, authors wrote that tissue plasminogen activator, or Roche's Activase, might be able to help some patients who need a ventilator but can't get access. The drug, which won FDA approval in 1987, is used to break up blood clots that cause strokes and heart attacks.
- **Gilead:** [An Open Letter from our Chairman and CEO.](#) Today we are working at speed to establish the temporary expanded access programs, while at the same time establishing the potential safety and efficacy of remdesivir and determining for which patients remdesivir may have activity.
- **The Motley Fool:** [Gilead Sciences Expands Access to Experimental COVID-19 Treatment.](#) Instead of approving one application at a time, the company will streamline its approach and allow physicians and hospitals to apply for emergency use of remdesivir for multiple patients at once. But there are still roadblocks that might not be as flexible.
- **Fortune:** [Malaria drug Trump touted as coronavirus treatment has been given FDA emergency authorization.](#) The Health and Human Services Department accepted 30 million doses of the drug, hydroxychloroquine, from Novartis AG's Sandoz unit, Secretary Alex Azar said in a statement late Sunday.
- **CNBC:** [Sanofi, Regeneron expand testing of potential coronavirus treatment.](#) The companies said enrolments for the mid-to-late stage trial of Kevzara, an immune-system modifying drug known as a monoclonal antibody, have now started in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Canada, and Russia. The U.S. trials began last week. The trial, expected to enroll about 300 patients, will recruit hospitalized patients from several countries who are severely or critically ill with COVID-19 infection.

Others

- **Fortune** (Paywall): [Fujifilm antiviral drug emerges as a promising underdog in the coronavirus treatment race.](#) Favipiravir has showed promise in two trials involving coronavirus patients, with more countries preparing to test its effectiveness.
- **WIRED:** [AI Can Help Scientists Find a Covid-19 Vaccine.](#) Over the last few weeks, teams at the Allen Institute for AI, Google DeepMind, and elsewhere have created AI tools, shared datasets and research

results, and shared them freely with the global scientific community. The article lists the various outcomes of various AI applications in the search for a vaccine.

- **The Guardian:** ['The more vaccine projects we have, the better our chances'](#). Leading scientist Adam Finn warns of stumbles along the way to Covid-19 immunisation. Finn's warning came as doctors and epidemiologists stressed how difficult it would be to contain the disease until people can be immunised against it.

DIAGNOSTICS

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- **Forbes:** [U.S. Approves Abbott Labs Five-Minute 'Rapid' Coronavirus Test](#). Abbott president and COO Robert Ford said that with rapid testing through their ID NOW test, healthcare providers can perform molecular point-of-care testing outside the traditional four walls of a hospital in outbreak hotspots delivering positive results in as little as five minutes and negative results in 13 minutes.

Others

- **Azernews:** [Regional countries request Iranian coronavirus diagnostic test kits](#). Pishtaz Teb Zaman Diagnostics said that regional countries such as Syria and Iraq are seeking Iranian coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnostic test kits.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

- **J&J:** [Johnson & Johnson Announces a \\$50 Million Commitment to Support Frontline Health Workers Battling Covid-19](#). The funds will be earmarked for assisting the doctors, nurses, midwives and community health workers who are working tirelessly to treat patients around the world during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

GLOBAL RESPONSE

- **EU:** [EU mobilises immediate support for its Western Balkan partners to tackle coronavirus](#). As part of the global response to the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission has announced up to €38 million in immediate support for the Western Balkans to tackle the health emergency caused by coronavirus and reallocation of €374 million to help the socio-economic recovery of the region.
- **Financial Times:** [UN calls for \\$2.5tn package for developing countries hit by virus](#). Unctad, the UN's trade and development agency, said \$1tn should be made available through the IMF's special drawing rights (the multilateral lender's foreign exchange reserve assets, available to its members without the usual IMF conditionality), \$1tn through debt relief, and a further \$500bn in a "Marshall Plan" for emergency services and social relief programmes, largely in the form of grants.
- **OXFAM in WEF:** [As coronavirus spreads to poorer countries, here's how the world can help](#). Oxfam is calling today for a package of nearly \$160 billion to avert the kind of loss of life, which would be enough to double the health spending of the world's 85 poorest countries, home to 3.7 billion people. Oxfam is also calling for immediate debt cancellation of poor countries, and massively increase aid to them. A Global Public Health Plan and Emergency Response, Oxfam believes, can help stop coronavirus from killing millions of people and over 10 million new paid and protected health workers, governments must requisition all private healthcare facilities. A global agreement is needed now so that vaccines and treatments, when ready, are rapidly available to everyone – for free.
- **Handelsblatt (in German):** [A 5-point-action-plan against pandemics – An op-ed by Wolfgang Ischinger & Stefan Oschmann](#). Wolfgang Ischinger chairman of the Munich Security Conference (MSC), and Stefan Oschmann, CEO of Merck, outline 5 crucial steps which should be considered when responding to future pandemics and how it will be possible to return to 'normality' after countries' current lockdowns. The 5 crucial points are: Prevention is the basic condition for success; interdisciplinary interconnectedness; massive investments in medical technologies;

global cooperation is a must; and Europe must finally come to its senses and act as a united front.

ACCESS/ SUPPLY OF MEDICINES

- **The Washington Post:** [As coronavirus cases explode in Iran, U.S. sanctions hinder its access to drugs and medical equipment](#). The broad U.S. restrictions on Iran's banking system and the embargo on its oil exports have limited Tehran's ability to finance and purchase essential items from abroad, including drugs as well as the raw materials and equipment needed to manufacture medicines domestically.
- **TIME:** [China Sends Medical Personnel, Supplies to Pakistan to Combat Coronavirus](#). China had previously sent ventilators and masks to Pakistan, a key link in China's ambitious multi-billion-dollar One Road Project linking south and central Asia with China.
- **New York Times:** [White House Airlifts Medical Supplies From China in Coronavirus Fight](#). Officials have teamed up with medical supply companies to speed the arrival of masks, gloves, gowns and other goods.

COVID-19: FOCUS ON AFRICA

- **RFI:** [Covid-19 could kill millions in Africa without immediate action: UN chief](#). United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres says he fears "millions and millions" of coronavirus cases in Africa, where the youth will not be spared. He called on wealthy countries to help the developing world, for their own sake.
- **GhanaWeb:** [Tobinco Pharmaceuticals donates medical supplies to Ministry of Health](#). The products donated included immune-boosting drugs such as Tofcee, and Zincvite manufactured by the Entrance Pharmaceuticals and Research Centre, also a member of the Tobinco Group. Boxes of Omal hand sanitizer, boxes of hand gloves. The company also donated a specially designed hand-washing device, which allows people to wash their hands without touching it.
- **Quartz (Paywall):** [Africa is watching a potential health disaster turn into an economic crisis much more quickly](#). There is now almost universal agreement among economists, think tanks and policy makers the global economy is heading into a recession due in the wake of the ongoing coronavirus health crisis. Nowhere is that more clear than in Africa.
- **FOX News:** [Coronavirus measures in Africa escalate to violence as police, military enforce lockdowns](#). As coronavirus cases in Africa rose above 4,000 on Saturday, several countries have taken escalating measures to enforce lockdowns and curfews in the hopes of preventing the disease from spreading.
- **BBC News:** [Mali goes to the polls despite coronavirus fears](#). Malians are voting in long-delayed parliamentary elections a day after the country's first coronavirus death.
- **Africanews:** [Peacekeeping radio stations provide COVID-19 information to vulnerable communities in conflict-affected countries](#). UN Peacekeeping currently has large, popular and trusted radio stations in four African countries: The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, which have already recorded cases of COVID-19; and Mali and South Sudan which have not. The stations ability to reach both big urban centers and isolated communities in countries which lack basic communications infrastructure, can play an important role in addressing the disease.

WHO – Daily COVID-19 update, 25 March
[Statement by Dr. Tedros:](#)

- He is very grateful to the many countries & foundations who have contributed; more than US\$ 622M has been received so far by the WHO, he thanked King Salman Center for Humanitarian Relief for its contribution of US\$ 10M
- Ensuring free movement of essential health products is vital for saving lives & curbing the social & economic impacts of the #COVID19 pandemic
- He specifically called upon countries to increase production, ensure free movement of essential health products and ensure equitable distribution of those products based on need
- He asked for specific attention to LMICs in Africa, Asia and Latin America
- Dr. Tedros also spoke about and [tweeted](#) out that he was honoured to brief G20 Trade Ministers on COVID19
- He said that there is commitment of the G20 countries to work together to improve the production & equitable supply of essential products
- WHO has published [guidelines](#) to help countries balance the demands of responding directly to COVID19, while maintaining essential health services

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