

COVID-19 vaccines and treatments output continues apace; as health systems and last mile hurdles remain collective stumbling blocks

- To date, over 13 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been produced and 11 billion have been administered. Presently, vaccine supplies outstrip global demand, with voluntary technology transfer playing a significant role. Urgent steps are needed to provide a high level of protection against COVID-19 among the elderly and vulnerable populations wherever they live.
- Several COVID-19 treatments are now standard of care for COVID-19. Biopharmaceutical companies with approved treatments are scaling up manufacturing capacity with wide use of voluntary licensing, but the effective roll out of treatments to all patients is dependent on swift regulatory approval, allocation strategies, health systems capacity, and testing.
- The historic scaling up of manufacturing and the numerous technology transfers and voluntary licenses are further proof that intellectual property has been an enabler throughout the pandemic. Recent COVID-19 waves underscore that equitable access to vulnerable populations should be commanding all our collective efforts.

13 April 2022, Geneva – The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve and challenge the public health response. Meanwhile, the biopharmaceutical industry continues to bring its R&D expertise and solutions to the pandemic, while scaling up manufacturing of safe and effective treatments and vaccines. There is now broad acknowledgement that supplies of COVID-19 vaccines have outstripped demand, and manufacturing of treatments for people who have contracted COVID-19 or who are unable to be vaccinated is on track thanks, in part, to widescale voluntary licensing. The biopharmaceutical industry renews its commitment to join all players in doubling-down and focusing efforts on supporting country readiness and contributing to equitable distribution, with a particular focus on the highest risk populations.

To date, 13.7 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been delivered¹. While 11 billion COVID-19 vaccines have been administered thus far, equitable distribution remains a major concern. The spread of the Omicron BA2 variant underscores the importance of targeted immunization and should focus all minds to ensure full course vaccinations are administered with haste to all in need, in particular the elderly, vulnerable populations, and people who are immunosuppressed. Sufficient vaccines are available to continue inoculation programs, since more than 7.98 billion doses could be produced this year. More than half of the doses forecast to be produced this year will be COVID-19 vaccines produced by companies member of [IFPMA](#), together with partners who are in technology transfer agreements with them. In parallel to COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, innovation into broader spectrum vaccines to tackle the pandemic continues apace, with combination vaccines or vaccines that are easier to transport and administer.

The biopharmaceutical industry remains steadfast in its position that [steps urgently need to be taken](#) to ensure all healthcare workers, the elderly, and those who are immunosuppressed or vulnerable through comorbidities wherever they live should receive a full course of vaccines. “The trend that we predicted last year that COVID-19 vaccine supplies will outstrip global demand has been proven correct,” said **Thomas Cueni, Director General, IFPMA**. The COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing scale-up has seen 372 partnerships forged, of which 88% (329) include technology

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/supply/covid-19-vaccine-market-dashboard>



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transfer or fill & finish. 51 manufacturing and production agreements were made in developing countries (LICs and LMICs).

In addition, several important commitments have been made by biopharmaceutical companies that are set to change Africa's vaccine manufacturing landscape in years to come. "To continue to advocate that vaccine equity is caused by scarcity of vaccines due to a lack of technology transfer flies in the face of the facts – both for the numbers of vaccines available but also for the way vaccines are made. The reasons for the woeful inequity are manifold but cannot be laid at the door of intellectual property," Cueni explained. "We remain steadfast in our verdict that the proposed World Trade Organization's TRIPS waiver is a solution in search of a problem. It is a distraction and is misleading in its promise of equity for this pandemic. And it sends the wrong signal to innovators for future pandemics," he concluded.

As the pandemic evolves, COVID-19 treatments are an increasingly critical part of pandemic response. Voluntary licensing has been used extensively. The collaborations have been set up directly by pharmaceutical companies or through Medicines Patent Pool. These collaborations help with the transfer of know-how and speeds up the recipients' manufacturing capabilities to be able to quickly produce affordable quality treatments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Other partnerships have been important in overcoming the shortages in materials needed to produce monoclonal antibody treatments.

Today, there is a range of approved treatments for people with COVID-19. But action is needed to address patient access – from regulatory authorities prioritising the review of new potential treatments and governments supporting weakened health systems to test and treat, through to putting in place mechanisms to ensure all indicated patients are prescribed available treatments quickly.

There is increasing acceptance that society will have to live with COVID-19. The vaccines and treatments that have been developed since the pandemic are essential public health tools to both alleviate the impact of the virus but also help people with other conditions access the care they need. Continued innovation remains essential. Fortunately, there is a strong pipeline for both COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, building on the 10 vaccines that have so far received WHO EUL approval² and the 18 different treatments that have been approved in the UK, USA, and EU.

Further innovation is critical to keep pace with the evolving nature of COVID-19. Today, there are 271 vaccines in preclinical and 147 in clinical phases and there are 1827 treatment candidates in clinical trials. Innovation is not without its risks; for example, so far 9 vaccine candidates that reached the final phase of clinical trials have been discontinued and 6 applications were rejected.

About IFPMA

IFPMA represents the research-based pharmaceutical companies and associations across the globe. The research-based pharmaceutical industry's 2 million employees discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that improve the life of patients worldwide. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community find solutions that improve global health.

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² <https://covid19.trackvaccines.org/agency/who/>