

Global Biopharma Industry pulls out all stops to address COVID-19

27 March 2020 | News

Commits to accelerate its effort to use its skills, technology and resources to bring safe, effective diagnostics, treatments and vaccines



The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA), representing the world's leading biopharmaceutical companies, has confirmed that having already mobilized on an unprecedented [scale](#) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, they commit to do more. The biopharmaceutical industry commits to accelerate its effort to use its skills, technology and resources to bring safe, effective diagnostics, treatments and vaccines to patients around the world as a matter of urgency.

David Ricks, Chairman and CEO of Eli Lilly and Co and IFPMA President, said: "We are sending a clear signal of how seriously industry is taking the pandemic and the need to act as one team. So, we are sharing our commitments on how we, as an industry, are stepping up to do all we can to fight this pandemic".

The commitments demonstrate the combined will of leading companies in the field to share scientific expertise, technical skills and manufacturing capabilities to bring forward therapies and vaccines to protect humankind from this escalating pandemic. The biopharmaceutical industry is uniquely positioned to work in partnership with governments, the WHO and health systems across the world in a concerted, collective response.

Among the [commitments](#) are to:

- use industry's expertise and know-how to speed up the development of safe and effective vaccines, partnering with others to make it possible;
- use industry's medical expertise to support global healthcare systems to manage the unprecedented increase in pressure they face;
- share tools and insights to test potential therapies and vaccines as well as developing and scaling up capacity of diagnostics for testing for COVID-19 patients as much as possible;
- increase industry's manufacturing capabilities and willingly share available capacity to ramp up production once a successful vaccine or treatment is developed;

- work to secure continuity of supply for all essential medicines, vaccines and diagnostics for patients with other life-threatening diseases, calling on governments to implement policies and decisions that facilitate access for those in need.

Biopharmaceutical companies began screening their libraries of medicines to identify potential treatments once the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) genome sequence was shared, building on the knowledge gained from decades of experience with new viruses such as SARS, MERS, Zika, and Ebola. The industry has devoted significant resources and worked with partners in public health to develop technologies that have dramatically shortened the time it takes to decode viruses and develop a potential vaccine. Hence, platforms are available to facilitate development of vaccines that swiftly enter clinical trials.

Today, more than 80 clinical trials are underway to test new and existing medicines. At least [nine IFPMA member companies](#) are researching and developing new diagnostic tests, vaccines or treatments and testing existing medicines to treat those infected with the virus. Other companies are involved in fast-tracking diagnostic technology to help detect cases more rapidly.

There is an unprecedented level of collaboration taking place across the industry as it joins hands with public agencies to further accelerate the development of new diagnostic tests, vaccines and treatments for patients. Numerous collaborative research programmes have been agreed in order to fast-track the development of therapeutics and vaccines with institutions such as [BARDA](#), [CEPI](#), [IMI](#) and others. The biopharmaceutical industry commits to continue collaborating with government agencies, academia and other health care stakeholders to ensure patients get the care they need.

Thomas Cueni, IFPMA Director General, says the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic demands extraordinary efforts across the board. He declares: “Society needs to know it can count on the biopharmaceutical industry to work to rapidly bring forward therapies, vaccines and diagnostics that protect humankind from this escalating pandemic and prepare the industry to better respond to future global health crises”.

He adds: “My first thoughts are obviously with all those impacted by the pandemic”. The gravity of the situation calls for an unprecedented one-team approach across the entire pharmaceutical industry: “We need to rally around this action plan that demonstrates our willingness to act”.

The profound global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means business as usual is not an option. It is posing a serious threat to the functioning of healthcare systems and to healthcare professionals. If not contained, the expected impact of COVID-19 on all health systems, let alone weaker health systems in low- and middle-income countries, will be devastating.