

EXPANDING GLOBAL ACCESS TO COVID TESTS & TREATMENTS



The gross inequalities that characterized the global rollout of first-generation COVID vaccines are being replicated again today when it comes to the distribution of COVID outpatient treatments and diagnostic tools. As a result, “test and treat” strategies designed to prevent the worst outcomes due to COVID-19 are only widely available in affluent nations. Expanding the World Trade Organization’s (WTO’s) June 2022 decision on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Agreement to help countries get access to imported generic tests and treatments is an important step toward addressing this ongoing injustice and saving lives.

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR AFFORDABLE COVID THERAPEUTICS IS NOT BEING MET

Existing Treatments Going Disproportionately to High-Income Countries

- 74% of Paxlovid treatment courses and 82% of other leading treatment courses have been purchased by high-income countries, despite high-income countries only accounting for 16% of the world’s population (*Duke, 11/4/22*)

Demand from Developing Countries Going Unfulfilled

- Developing countries eligible for supply through global organizations are still waiting for actual doses (*Nature, 9/15/22*)
- Nature: “limited supplies and high costs have restricted the flow of COVID-19 antivirals to low- and middle-income regions”

Developing Countries Have Often Paid More than High-Income Countries

- Multiple examples of developing countries paying more than developed countries for the same COVID medications, including high prices for tocilizumab and baricitinib (*MedRxIV, 6/3/21*)

Demand Will Increase with Affordability & New Treatments

- Therapeutic orders likely to increase as prices come down
- New treatments are still in development for standard risk populations, wider treatment windows, with fewer contraindications, to treat long COVID and more

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR COVID DIAGNOSTICS IS NOT BEING MET EITHER

Vast Majority of COVID Tests Are in High-Income Countries

- High-income countries are testing for COVID 50 times more often than low- and middle-income countries (*ACT-Accelerator, Q2 2022*)

Diagnostic Tools Unavailable for Even Basic "Test & Treat" Strategies

- An estimated 750 million tests are needed just to treat high-risk individuals likely to contract COVID next year, let alone to implement widespread screening (*ACT-Accelerator, Q2 2022*)

LIFTING WTO BARRIERS TO TESTS & TREATMENTS IS ABOUT BASIC FAIRNESS

The U.S. Has Prioritized Public Health Over Intellectual Property Rights Domestically

- The U.S. government has authorized at least 59 non-voluntary uses of third party patents since the start of the COVID pandemic (*Knowledge Ecology International, 6/20/22*)
- Easing WTO restrictions on the export of COVID tests and treatments produced under compulsory licenses would make it easier for developing countries to take similar action, as exports are needed to make generic production economically feasible in countries with small internal markets

U.S. Leaders Have Benefited from COVID Therapeutics Being Denied to Much of the World

- Everyone whose health can be protected by access to COVID tests and treatments deserves the same access as President Joe Biden, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Chief Medical Advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci and many others who have benefited from COVID therapeutics like Paxlovid

BIG PHARMA'S DELAY TACTICS ARE COSTING LIVES

Big Pharma's Concern about the "Scope" of Test & Treatment Access Is a Delay Tactic

- The proposed WTO agreement only covers technologies used to treat and diagnose COVID and violations would be subject to the same array of enforcement tools as other IP violations

Roughly a Quarter Million Dead from COVID Since the June 2022 WTO Decision

- Approximately 240,000 people have died from COVID worldwide while the U.S. has considered whether it will support lifting WTO barriers to test & treatment access (*Our World in Data, 10/24/22*)

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING TESTS & TREATMENTS AT THE WTO

The World Health Organization (WHO)

- "Countries are facing challenges to access affordable diagnostics. For medicines we have few voluntary licenses from key technology holders to scale up manufacturing and respond to the needs in countries." (*Geneva Health Files, 10/12/22*)

Developing Countries

- "We urge all Members to move beyond the circular Q&A sessions and expeditiously proceed." (*South African statement, 10/12/22*)

Congressional Leaders

- "Simply put, we must make vaccines, testing, and treatments available everywhere if we are going to crush the virus anywhere." (*Congressional letter, 10/5/22*)

Public Health Groups & Civil Society

- "Countries are lagging in planning for robust test-and-treatment programs because of uncertainty about supply, affordability, and equitable distribution of COVID-19 therapeutics." (*Civil society letter, 8/23/22*)