



Innovation and Access to Medicines and Vaccines: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities for Middle Income Countries

Room XXVI
Wednesday May 21 2014
1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

Co-organizers: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Knowledge Ecology International (KEI), Treatment Action Group (TAG), Oxfam, Health Action International (HAI) and Civil Society Coalition

Background

Governments, patients and treatment providers in developing countries are facing rising prices of new medicines, vaccines and other essential medical technologies. Due to decades of pressure to ramp up intellectual property protection, multinational pharmaceutical companies' increased interest in "emerging" markets, and the decreased availability of global health and development funding, governments that are considered "middle income economies" are seeing the cost of medical technologies they need to keep populations healthy skyrocketing. This is happening while both communicable and non-communicable diseases are affecting poor patients living in developing countries.

The strategies available to governments and other stakeholders to make medicines, vaccines and other medical technologies more affordable are well known. Competition has proven to be one of the most reliable and effective means to reduce prices. When patents stand in the way of market competition licensing, both compulsory or voluntary such as through the Medicines Patent Pool, can nevertheless facilitate access to generic medicines. The use of TRIPS flexibilities, technology transfer to accelerate multi-source production, pooled procurement, health technology assessment, price controls and reference pricing are also widely applied cost-containment measures. Member States have also agreed to explore and promote a range of new incentive mechanisms that promote both innovation and access by de-linking the cost of R&D from the price of products.

However, there is now a new push to put a single strategy -- tiered pricing -- at the centre of the global health agenda. At the November 2013 Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Executive Director of the Global Fund presented a proposal for a blue-ribbon Task Force which would establish a global framework for multi-tiered pricing for medicines, diagnostics and vaccines. The proposal is said to be officially co-sponsored by GAVI, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP and UNITAID. Civil society have already publicly asked the Global Fund (and the other agencies co-sponsoring) to abandon this proposal¹. While tiered-pricing is known to be the preferred strategy of the pharmaceutical industry, the voice of middle-income country governments and WHO has largely been missing from these debates. Also missing is a broader consideration of the many policy tools available to governments to ensure access to medicines for their populations. For vaccines, the GAVI Alliance promotes tiered pricing as the strategy to increase access to newer vaccines.² The lower prices negotiated with pharmaceutical companies in exchange for donor support have undoubtedly benefited many patients in need. Yet millions of children living in poor but non-GAVI eligible countries have not benefited from the same rate of introduction of new vaccines in their national immunization programmes due to high prices and simply that they live in a country that is not GAVI-eligible. Furthermore, the challenges to access affordable vaccines are growing for GAVI countries. Almost a quarter of GAVI eligible countries will lose GAVI support in the next years and continued access to lower prices has not been systematically assured.

The 67th World Health Assembly is a unique opportunity for Member States and WHO to engage in open debates and to identify public-health driven strategies to promote access to medicines and vaccines for all in need.

¹ Open letter from 220 civil society organizations to Mark Dybul, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria: Abandon the 'blue-ribbon Task Force' to develop a global framework on tiered-pricing." May 13, 2014. <http://infojustice.org/archives/32727>

² Berkley S. "Improving access to vaccines through tiered pricing." *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 11 March 2014. <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2813%2962424-1/fulltext>

The co-organizers of this event would like to invite governments, civil society, industry and other global health stakeholders to a side event to discuss the current situation faced by governments and patients in Middle Income countries and ways forward to ensure affordable access to medicines and vaccines to millions in need.

Agenda:

Event Chair: Ellen 't Hoen, Medicines Law & Policy (confirmed)

Opening remarks about global access to medicines movement (5 minutes). The relevance of MIC (e.g. Brazil/Thailand) in increasing access to medicines in all developing countries. New challenges in a post-TRIPS world for AIDS, HCV, NCDs, vaccines. New push for global norms on Tiered Pricing in both medicines and vaccines. The importance of WHO and Member States leadership in implementing a variety of global health strategies, including the WHO Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property.

Presentations (7 Minutes each)

- **Governments strategies to increase access to medicines and vaccines, challenges and opportunities –**

Dr. Suwit Wibulpolprasert (confirmed)

*Vice Chair - International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPPF) - Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Foundation (HITAF) International Health Policy Program (IHPP Thailand)
Ministry of Public Health - Thailand*

Dr. Mokhtar Warida (confirmed)

First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

- **Innovative Financing for Solidarity – Dr. Philippe Duneton (confirmed)**

Executive Director ai, UNITAID

Panel

- **Growing access to medicines and vaccines challenges faced by treatment providers in Middle Income Countries – Rohit Malpani, Director of Policy and Analysis, MSF Access Campaign (confirmed)**

- **Achieving affordability by changing the current innovation system: what should WHO and Member States do? - Jamie Love, Director of Knowledge Ecology International (confirmed)**

- **Tiered pricing: why, why not, when and how - Dr. Suerie Moon, Harvard School of Public Health (confirmed)**

- **The mandate and the work of WHO to promote access to medical technologies - Dr. Zafar Mirza, Coordinator Department of Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, Health Systems & Innovation Cluster- World Health Organization (confirmed)**

Invited Respondents/Planned Interventions followed by discussion (30 mins)