

News Release

R&D Pharmaceutical industry welcomes main conclusions of 2009 flu pandemic response

Geneva, 19 May 2011 – The research-based pharmaceutical industry, represented by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA), welcomes the assessment of the global response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic conducted by the independent International Health Regulations (IHR) Review Committee, whose final report was the subject of a resolution¹ approved by the World Health Assembly. The pandemic response led to an unprecedented level of collaboration including the involvement of the world's major influenza vaccine manufacturers who committed to donate over 80% of the 200 million doses target set by the World Health Organization (WHO) to help developing countries. The IFPMA confirms its support for the Committee's main conclusions. Despite the scale and speed of global response to the 2009 pandemic, the IFPMA concurs with the findings of the report that there remain areas for improvement especially in terms of sustaining the appropriate production capacity which may still be insufficient for global populations in the future.

In reality, from the beginning of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic a broad coalition of international institutions, governments, public health authorities, scientists and vaccine producers came together to mount the most comprehensive pandemic response ever undertaken. As vaccines and antivirals are crucial tools in the fight against pandemic influenza, the research-based pharmaceutical industry had an essential role to play when called on by the public health authorities. The vaccine manufacturers ensured the deliveries of vaccines began in just three months, speeding up a process which would generally take between four to six months. This was achieved by significant investments in pandemic vaccine development and production capacity in the years preceding the pandemic. In addition, coordinated efforts ensured that antivirals were provided to WHO and governments.

Eduardo Pisani, IFPMA Director General explains the key learnings for the industry: "It has reminded us that timely access to candidate vaccine viruses and reagents is vital; secondly, that rapid evaluation and approval mechanisms for vaccines must be in place along with effective distribution networks; and thirdly, that seasonal vaccination recommendations provide a means to reduce the burden of influenza whilst sustaining and increasing global vaccine production capacity."

The R&D pharmaceutical industry fully welcomes the IHR report's recommendation for countries to immunize their high-risk populations yearly against seasonal influenza². This is also supported in the 2003 World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA56.19), urging countries to immunize at high-risk groups with the goal of attaining a 50% vaccination coverage of at risk populations, in particular those over 65, by 2006 and 75% vaccination coverage by 2010. The target has not yet been achieved, resulting in current seasonal vaccine usage levels failing to match the growth in production capacity.

The IHR report and the findings of the recent WHO Open-Ended Working Group of Member States on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (OEWG/PIP) are important milestones in influenza pandemic preparedness. In both of these processes, IFPMA members have renewed the R&D pharmaceutical industry's commitment to providing financial support for the WHO Surveillance Network's vaccine-specific activities, allocating pandemic vaccines for developing country use, and fulfilling its unique role in the preparation and delivery of pandemic vaccines for the benefit of people worldwide.

¹ WHA A64/10 Add.1 – under "Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)"

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About the IFPMA:

The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations is the global non-profit NGO representing the research-based pharmaceutical industry, including the biotech and vaccine sectors. Its members comprise 26 leading international companies and 44 national and regional industry associations covering low, middle and high income countries. The industry's R&D pipeline contains hundreds of new medicines and vaccines being developed to address global disease threats, including cancer, heart disease, HIV/AIDS and malaria. The IFPMA Clinical Trials Portal (www.ifpma.org/ClinicalTrials), the IFPMA's Ethical Promotion online resource (www.ifpma.org/EthicalPromotion/) and its Developing World Health Partnerships Directory (www.ifpma.org/HealthPartnerships) help make the industry's activities more transparent. The IFPMA supports a wide range of WHO technical activities, notably those relating to medicine efficacy, quality and safety, and coordinates industry participation in the WHO IMPACT initiative to combat counterfeit medicines. It also provides the secretariat for the International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH).

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