

Global Vaccination Policy Statement

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Introduction

History has shown us, time and time again, that the wealthy are seldom prepared to part with even a fraction of the bountiful resources at their fingertips for no other reason than that it may benefit the lives of those less fortunate. The issue at hand is no exception. Here are extremely wealthy nations, who for the most part, have been reluctant to assist the vaccination of less wealthy nations, despite the undeniable fact that it would be for the benefit of their own economic recovery in the near future.

A covid vaccine will prove to be one of the most vital objects of the year 2021, as it will allow for a worldwide economic recovery without the looming threat of a highly infectious, and often fatal, disease. It is and will continue to be imperative that the vast majority of humanity is protected against this illness that has kept the world closed for too long. To ensure the steady pace of said recovery, we must see to it that all nations of the world have ready access to the vaccine, not simply ones who possess the ability to acquire them faster than others.

Currently, there exists a massive imbalance in vaccination rates globally, as wealthier nations have bought up vaccines provided by the main vaccine conglomerates, (who are often from these very same nations) and thus have significantly higher vaccination rates than the likes of Sub-Saharan Africa, where governments have far fewer resources available to simply purchase millions of vaccines to accommodate their booming populations, in the midst of an already struggling economy. To convince wealthier nations to provide vaccines to others will be a difficult task, mainly because they tend to be extremely nearsighted and have failed to see the positive long-term effects a fully vaccinated world will have upon themselves.

Recent events/documents

As of late, the coronavirus pandemic has seen steadily increasing numbers worldwide, suddenly closing the light at the end of the tunnel that had begun to emerge at the start of summer. This mostly unforeseen spike in cases is due to the mutation of the COVID 19 virus in response to measures taken to curb its spread. These mutations, or variants, have seen the virus infect its victims at a much faster and unpredictable rate. These deadly variants struck several nations just as they began to relax safety measures, which allowed them to spread faster than governments were able to react effectively.

To prove the danger of these variants, we need only look to the most extreme example, India, and its struggle with the delta variant. A newly reopened India was very haughty with its handling of the pandemic, as a nation with such a dense population and low infrastructure was able to hold off the virus quite effectively in comparison to others. However, just as India thought

it was in the clear, the delta variant hit and wreaked havoc upon the people. It is estimated that upwards of 4 million people died as a result of its delta outbreak, as the Indian government was extremely unprepared and had to scramble to put in place old measures to put an end to the outbreak.

India is not the only example of a variant catching a country off guard, as new, more infectious, and oftentimes more fatal variants have emerged elsewhere, such as the Beta variant in South Africa, the Gamma variant in Brazil, and the Alpha variant in the United Kingdom, all of which have spread across the globe.

Poorer nations are especially susceptible to covid variants, because, as stated earlier, a significantly smaller share of their populations are vaccinated in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. In January of 2021 Pfizer, in an act of apparent goodwill, proclaimed its intention to provide 40 million vaccines to less fortunate nations for a fraction of the standard price. As of August 2021, Pfizer has provided less than 5% of its promised charity vaccines.

Another obstacle in the way of worldwide immunity is conflict, internal or otherwise. One major factor in the vaccination of a territory or nation is the amount of political stability present. For example, let's take a look at the most recent example of a major political turnover: Afghanistan. The Taliban's capture of the capital city Kabul has caused chaos to erupt across the already war-torn nation, leading to a massive drop in daily immunizations, going from about 135,000 vaccinations during the week before the Taliban takeover to about 30,000 during the week after. Unfortunately, it will be difficult for western powers to guarantee a vaccinated Afghanistan, as long as the hostile regime remains in power.

A key document regarding universal vaccination is the written FDA approval for the Pfizer vaccine. The FDA is a widely respected authority within the United States and elsewhere, meaning that it has and will continue to build confidence in the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer vaccine, while also reducing vaccine skepticism. Currently, Pfizer is the only vaccine to be approved by the FDA, however, Moderna has begun the approval process and it is widely believed that other vaccine manufacturers are not far behind.

Connections

Albania is one of the poorest nations of Europe, with a gross domestic product of just 15 billion USD, a number which may appear large compared to other nations considered to be impoverished, but the nation's economic output pales in comparison to its European neighbors. This is undoubtedly a result of decades spent in a state of international isolation, with diplomatic relations even being closed off to its fellow communist nations. During this twenty-year period, ending in 1991, Albania considered itself to be entirely self-reliant. Currently, however, Albania finds itself in a position of great reliance on other nations for the acquisition of life-saving vaccines.

Due to Albania's destitute state of affairs, it has received much of its vaccine supply from donations. The Balkan nation received ten thousand doses of the Sputnik V vaccine from the United Arab Emirates in March of 2021. The European Union has also contributed 145,000 doses to the Albanian vaccine effort, as a part of their wider donation of 450,000 vaccines to the entire Balkan region.

These contributions are much appreciated in Albania, but it is still in need of far more doses if it is to become fully immune. As of August 2021, 20% of the country's population has been fully vaccinated, about 600,000 of its 2.8 million total population. Additionally, cases of covid 19 in Albania have, as in several other nations, once more seen a steady increase after being in a free fall since the end of February, meaning that the need for vaccines is as urgent as ever. Albania, however, is not among the nations in the direst need of vaccines. There are several other nations with higher populations, larger territories, and a far lower vaccination rate that depend on the goodwill of wealthy nations to ensure the future of their country.

Solutions

Here are listed two solutions to the ongoing crisis of the worldwide covid 19 vaccine imbalance, one that will supply the less fortunate nations with vaccines in the short term, and another that will see to it that they will be able to obtain vaccines in the long term.

The short-term solution, one that has been mentioned several times previously within this policy statement, is for high income nations to donate vaccines to low income nations who are unable to purchase them themselves. This solution is already somewhat in place, with companies like COVAX overseeing the transfer of vaccines to developing countries. The United Kingdom in particular has been very generous in the donation of vaccines to its former imperial holdings, such as Jamaica, Kenya, and Indonesia, having donated nine million doses in total. However, it is imperative for more highly developed nations to make the same commitment to universal vaccination as the United Kingdom has.

The United States, in particular, is in a strong position to export surplus vaccines abroad. At the current rate of vaccine production, the United States is expected to be left with an excess of one billion vaccines by December. The Biden administration has agreed to supply an amount of the surplus to Canada and Mexico, but it undoubtedly has the capacity to vaccinate far beyond its immediate borders.

Convincing the United States and its allies should not be a difficult task, either, as there exist several advantages to a western-led global vaccination effort. The first and most obvious reason for a concentrated worldwide immunization program is the potential to contain the virus to such a degree that it may not have the opportunity to resurge after the vaccines wear off. An international containment of covid 19 would also prevent mutation of the disease into new variants which may also pose a threat to a vaccinated west.

The other, not as obvious but just as prevalent reason for the western powers to assist in the vaccination of developing countries is to counter the growing influence of China within third world nations. China has been more than willing to supply low-income countries in Africa and elsewhere with vaccines in exchange for economic influence in the country in question. Such countries include Egypt, Mozambique, Indonesia, and several others.

However, China's vaccines have proven themselves to be quite ineffective compared to western alternatives, with prevention rates dipping as low as 50%. This could be a key opportunity for the west to step in where China has failed and provide these nations with vaccines that can effectively protect their people from covid 19. Doing so would counter China's growing global influence while bringing the developed world yet closer to full immunization.

The second, long-term solution, should guarantee poorer nations a steady vaccine supply for years to come. This solution includes breaking the vaccine monopoly of the major vaccine manufacturers so that other, smaller companies may begin producing vaccines at a faster rate, and at a potentially lower cost.

Put simply, the massive vaccine conglomerates that we are all too familiar with (i. E. Pfizer, Moderna, Astrazeneca) possess patents on said vaccines, meaning that no other companies may replicate their vaccines with the objective of making a profit. Meaning that even if the infrastructure, materials, and political will exist to produce more vaccines, doing so would nonetheless be a breach of international copyright laws.

A way to bypass this, however, would be to force the aforementioned vaccine companies to waiver their patents, thus allowing other companies to legally produce those very same vaccines. This would be the most ideal solution to the global vaccine shortage, as this would cause the number of vaccines within global circulation to skyrocket, thus lowering their price and making them more affordable to developing nations.

Recent history has shown us this solution to be valid since it has been implemented successfully before. In 2003, in an effort to allow Sub-Saharan nations access to HIV/AIDS vaccines, the patents for said vaccines were waived, resulting in cases of HIV/AIDS within Africa to see a steady decline. I believe that a similar phenomenon will occur in Africa and beyond should covid 19 vaccine patents be given the same treatment.

There has, however, been a lot of pushback to this proposed solution. Waiving the vaccine patents of certain companies would obviously cause profits to fall, as their would be far more competition in the market. Due to this factor, the major vaccine companies have heavily lobbied politicians, particularly within Europe, to scrap the idea.

The current situation involving the proposed patent waivers and its subsequent backlash connects to the previous point about wealthier nations being unwilling to put in a significant effort to assist the less fortunate. Politicians need to see past the dollar bills being

waved beneath their noses and acknowledge the course of action that will result in a victory for developed and developing alike, moreso now, during this time of crisis across the globe.

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