



UNIVERSITIES ALLIED FOR ESSENTIAL MEDICINES

Make vaccines, treatments and diagnostics related to the COVID-19 pandemic that are developed with public funding accessible at affordable cost to everyone worldwide

Addressed to:

Minister of Health, Sports and Welfare: Hugo de Jonge

Minister of Medical Care: Martin van Rijn

Minister of Economic Affairs: Eric Wiebes

Minister of Education, Culture and Science: Ingrid van Engelshoven

Chair of the Nederlandse Federatie van Universitair Medische Centra (NFU): Prof. Dr. Willy Spaan

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 a global pandemic¹. As individuals and organizations who are collectively dedicated to ensuring access to medicines for all, we are concerned about the affordable access² to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics which will be crucial in containing COVID-19, in the Netherlands and abroad. In this letter, we would like to express these concerns to the Dutch Government and the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres (Nederlandse Federatie van Universitair Medische Centra).

The Netherlands is widely known for performing top-level biomedical research fueled by significant public investment. For example, at least €1,000,000 have been devoted³ through

¹ WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19. Published on: March 2020. Available at:

<https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

²'Accessibility' as defined by WHO. Accessed 24 February 2020 Available at:

[who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/accessibility-definition/](https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/accessibility-definition/)

³Funding received noted by Utrecht University public [website](#):

(A) TOP-ZonMW grant: € 675.000 Available at:

<https://www.zonmw.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/fundamenteel-onderzoek/programmas/project-detail/top-subsidies/unravelling-the-epi-demiology-and-pathogenesis-of-the-novel-human-coronavirus-mers-cov/resultaten/>

(B) Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI): IMI is a private-public partnership. Half of IMI's funding comes from European tax payers contributing to the Horizon 2020 programme for Research and Innovation. IMI runs the Zoonotic anticipation and preparedness

public funding mechanisms to the research and development of a monoclonal antibody discovered at Utrecht University and Erasmus Medical Centre, which is considered a potential candidate for treating COVID-19. On March 31st, the Dutch government announced to make an additional amount of 42 million euros available for biomedical research related to the COVID-19 outbreak⁴. It will be of crucial importance for the global outbreak response that the results of such public investment into the research and development of vaccines, treatments and diagnostics will be accessible at affordable cost to everyone, worldwide⁵.

The Dutch government and the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres are already showing their commitment to improving access to publicly funded vaccines, treatments and diagnostics through the 10 principles of Socially Responsible Licensing, which have been published in 2018⁶. The current situation is a key moment to show that these principles are not just a well meant intention, but are being translated into concrete actions within the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We therefore ask the Dutch government and the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres to ensure that all COVID-19 related vaccines, treatments and diagnostics developed with public funding in the Netherlands will be affordable and accessible to everyone, worldwide. This is of utmost importance given the enormous global demand for vaccines, treatments and diagnostics in the midst of this global health emergency.

To ensure global access of all vaccines, treatments and diagnostics developed with public funding, we ask the Dutch government to commit to the following:

- (1) Promote the issuing of non-exclusive licences as the primary means of technology transfer and make this a prerequisite for receiving public funding.
- (2) Include step-in rights in the funding agreements, which the government can enforce when the licensing partner fails to comply with the requirements of providing sufficient quantities of the vaccine, treatment or diagnostic at affordable cost.
- (3) Encourage the non-enforcing of intellectual property rights in low and middle-income countries.
- (4) License knowledge and intellectual property rights in the already existing Medicines Patent Pool (MPP)⁷ or the proposed Covid-19 Patent Pool⁸.

initiative (ZAPI). The aforementioned research group was funded by the ZAPI and granted: € 794 305 (Available at: <https://www.imi.europa.eu/projects-results/maps-statistics>). ZAPI reports this project as their funded initiative (Available at: <http://zapi-imi.eu/latest-publications>)

⁴ "Kamerbrief COVID-19 - Update stand van zaken 31 maart" Date: 31th of March 2020: Available at:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/03/31/kamerbrief-covid-19---update-stand-van-zaken-31-maart>

⁵ The Fair Medicine principle forms a good starting point to provide true access.

⁶ Ten principles for Socially Responsible Licensing. Published on: June 2019. Available at:

https://www.nfu.nl/img/pdf/19.4511_Ten_principles_for_Socially_Responsible_Licensing_v19-12-2019.pdf

⁷ Medicines Patent Pool. Available at: <https://medicinespatentpool.org/>

- (5) Ensure that clinical trial results for all vaccines, treatments and diagnostics will be reported in publicly available clinical trial databases.

Protecting the health and well-being of all citizens during this pandemic requires a global response rooted in solidarity and collaboration, which is only possible if the results of publicly funded research are accessible at global scale. If monopolies inhibit the affordable access to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics in certain parts of the world, the efforts of the Dutch Government to protect its citizens will be ineffective.

We hope you will take our concerns into account and generate the decisive and necessary public health response this pandemic requires.

Sincerely,

Universities Allied for Essential Medicines The Netherlands

Supporting organisations and individuals

License to Heal (Samenwerkende politieke jongeren organisaties op het gebied van dure geneesmiddelen)

Stichting Commons Network

Stichting Farma ter Verantwoording

Stichting Wemos

Martje van Nes, (interim) Delegate Director Artsen zonder Grenzen

Wilbert Bannenberg, Public Health consultant

Prof Dr. Hans Büller, Oprichter Fair Medicine

Prof Dr. Hans Hogerzeil, Co-Chair, Lancet Commission on Essential Medicines Policies.
Professor of Global Health, University Medical Center, Groningen

⁸ Love, James. President and Minister of Health of Costa Rica ask WHO to create a global pool of rights in COVID-19 related technologies. Knowledge Ecology International. Published on: March 2020. Available at: <https://www.keionline.org/32556>

