



News Release

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JPMA Statement on the informal WTO TRIPS Waiver discussions

On May 3, 2022, the WTO Secretariat submitted a document on the results of informal discussions by the European Union, India, South Africa, and the United States, on the exemption of countries from the obligation to protect the intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines (TRIPS Waiver), to the TRIPS Council. However, the Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association and its member companies have a different view from them.

COVID-19 vaccine production from both developing and developed country pharmaceutical manufacturers has reached 12 billion doses within a year of the first vaccine being approved. Today, the industry is able to produce more than a billion vaccine doses each month. Unprecedented cooperation involving many companies in developed and developing countries helped to overcome the underproduction issue. The cooperation for development and product expansion of the vaccines was made on the condition that the intellectual property rights were internationally protected.

The vaccine production involves a number of technical issues to be solved, including those on production facilities, procurement of raw materials, and know-how. Therefore, TRIPS Waiver may not necessarily contribute to the further scaling up of vaccine production.

TRIPS Waiver was initially proposed as a measure to encourage vaccine production in 2020, when there was no COVID-19 vaccine approved. However, as mentioned above, it is already clear that the intellectual property rights do not prevent access to COVID-19 vaccines. TRIPS Waiver is obviously a wrong solution to address the underproduction of COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, given that the production level is currently sufficient, it is also considered as an outdated and unnecessary solution.

The present issue is not the underproduction of vaccines but the way to deliver the vaccines to those who need them. Now that the underproduction issue has been resolved, the TRIPS Waiver proposals should be shelved and the focus of discussions should be on removal of barriers to deliver the vaccines to those who need them, including the infrastructure which needs to be improved, consisting of pharmaceutical administration, distribution, and healthcare professionals.

We, the pharmaceutical industry, will continue to put all our efforts to bring COVID-19 under control as soon as possible and save as many lives as possible, in close partnership with concerned parties

including government agencies in each country.

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