

Pfizer to offer low-cost medicines, vaccines to poor nations

May 25 2022, by Tom Murphy



A woman pushes a baby in a stroller past a sign hanging outside Pfizer headquarters in New York, Monday, May 23, 2022. Three doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine offer strong protection for children younger than 5, the company announced Monday, May 23, 2022. Pfizer plans to give the data to U.S. regulators later this week in a step toward letting the littlest kids get the shots. Credit: AP Photo/Mary Altaffer

Pfizer said Wednesday that it will provide nearly two dozen products, including its top-selling COVID-19 vaccine and treatment, at not-for-profit prices in some of the world's poorest countries.

The drugmaker announced the program at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland, and said it was aimed at improving health equity in 45 lower-income countries. Most of the countries are in Africa, but the list also includes Haiti, Syria, Cambodia and North Korea.

The products, which are widely available in the U.S. and the European Union, include 23 medicines and vaccines that treat infectious diseases, some cancers and rare and inflammatory conditions. Company spokeswoman Pam Eisele said only a small number of the medicines and vaccines are currently available in the 45 countries.

New York-based Pfizer will charge only manufacturing costs and "minimal" distribution expenses, Eisele said. It will comply with any sanctions and all other applicable laws.

The drugmaker also plans to provide help with public education, training for health care providers and drug supply management.

"What we discovered through the pandemic was that supply was not enough to resolve the issues that these countries are having," Pfizer Chairman and CEO Albert Bourla said Wednesday during a talk at Davos.

He noted that billions of doses of the company's COVID-19 vaccine, Comirnaty, have been offered for free to low-income countries, mainly through the U.S. government, but those doses can't be used right now.

Pfizer's plan will still leave many middle-income countries and other

nations "to pay through the nose for lifesaving drugs they can't afford," said a statement from the People's Vaccine Alliance, a grouping of human rights organizations advocating for broader sharing of vaccines and their underlying technology. "We shouldn't hail pandemic profiteers as heroes, even when they make qualified gestures like this," the statement said.

Earlier this month, the head of the World Health Organization called on Pfizer to make its COVID-19 treatment more widely available in poorer countries.

Comirnaty brought in nearly \$37 billion in sales last year, and analysts expect the company's COVID-19 treatment Paxlovid to add almost \$24 billion this year, according to the data firm FactSet.

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