INTERVIEW
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We need to create the environment in Europe which attracts global life science investment

The human and economic cost of the pandemic has led to an unprecedented response from the research community. EFPIA has aimed to foster collaborative research, among our members and beyond. We called on our members as of the very beginning in early February to identify suitable assets in their libraries, so that these could be utilized in the fight against coronaviruses.

Ms. Moll, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed raw materials shortages in the European Union effecting the production of a significant number of important for public health medicines. Are you taking into consideration of prioritizing API's production in the Eurozone countries that are imported today?

Europe's innovative, research-based pharmaceutical industry already has a strong in-built resilience due to its strong research presence in Europe. According to a survey of EFPIA members conducted in January 2020, 76.6% of its patented active ingredients are manufactured in the EU or the United Kingdom, 11.9% in the United States and 9% come from Asia, most often from Japan or China. These are innovative technologies, but it is true that years of cost containment in the generic sector has led to greater reliance on APIs from India and China.

A constructive dialogue started between all EFPIA stakeholders and the EU Member States about the research field following the Covid-19 pandemic. What is your estimation of achieving better health conditions for citizens, while also leading to economic recovery?

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A few days later, the Innovative Medicines Initiatives launched the IMI Call 21, targeting coronavirus. The Innovative Medicines Initiatives is a joint collaboration between the European Commission and EFPIA, and it is the world's largest public-private partnership in health.

Together we launched a special fast-track procedure to collect applications, from both academic and industry partners, to join forces and develop therapeutics and diagnostics against the coronavirus. During the 4 weeks of this call for applications, IMI received 144 project submissions. 8 projects have been selected for funding, financed 50% by the European Commission, and 50% by EFPIA, via in kind contribution.

The IMI call is typical of many collaborative research initiatives across diagnostics, vaccines and treatments. Our members have committed billions to the fight against COVID-19. The pandemic has underlined the need for a strong European research-ecosystem to build our resilience to health threats and address our existing health challenges.

How can Europe ensure its protection against future pandemics? What changes should drive towards institutional and business strengthening?

As well as the personal costs, this virus has clearly demonstrated the devastating economic impact of a global pandemic and that our health is inextricably linked to our economy. For this reason, we very much welcome the European Commission's commitment to resilience and recovery, in particular the inclusion of the new Health Programme, EU4Health and the funding for Horizon Europe, which will be reinforced to fund vital research in health, resilience and the green and digital transitions.

This crisis made it crystal clear to all that the only way out of the shadow of COVID-19 is through medical innovation –by rapidly developing diagnostics, treatments and ultimately vaccines that can enable life in Europe to return to normal. The crisis has underlined the need for an infrastructure and policy environment that supports medical research in Europe. Our research eco-system is an essential part of the region's resilience to this pandemic, future health threats and our ongoing health challenges and should be clearly addressed in the EU Pharmaceutical Strategy. To be effective, this eco-system requires a regulatory framework that is stable yet fast, effective and globally competitive. It has to include an Intellectual Property (IP) framework that protects investment in medical research and guarantees at least parity with competitor regions such as the US and China. It needs to look at new incentives for high unmet medical needs, such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR). It needs to support faster, more equitable access to new treatments for patients across Europe and a research infrastructure that helps deliver the next generation of treatments.

The pharmaceutical industry in Europe continues to invest yearly an estimated 36.5 Million Euros, in Research & Development (R&D). However, the United Stated seem to have taken the lead into delivering "good news" regarding dealing with the pandemic situation. Is it estimated that more capital should be invested in the European R&D?

We need to create the environment in Europe which attracts global life science investment. That means developing our research and health data infrastructure, ensuring our regulatory and IP frameworks are globally competitive and building on our strengths in many scientific areas.

During the pandemic outbreak that citizens were highly concerned, and unsecured, significant shortages were recorded in the supply of critical for health drugs dealing with serious illnesses. What is the picture that EFPIA has captured so far regarding this issue?

The pandemic increased the demand for medicines particularly in areas such as intensive care medicines while at the same time export restrictions, stockpiling and reductions in air freight capacity presented enormous challenges to ensuring the continuous supply of medicines. EFPIA member companies worked tirelessly and collaboratively with the EU Commission and Member States, increasing capacity and finding pragmatic solutions that put the needs of patients first. D

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