

Theme area:

What are the effects of IPRs on the transfer of knowledge and global distribution of goods in times of crisis and how could the systems be recalibrated to boost technology transfer, local capacities and improve supply chains and consumers' interests?

Vaccine licensing in pandemic times

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Vaccines as part of the public health mandate assume a significant importance. They have a vital role in universal immunization programs as well as national immunization programs. Since the announcement of the Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO, several countries, companies and institutions have developed vaccines for COVID-19. Vaccines for COVID-19 are of various types such as inactivated viral vaccines, live attenuated vaccines, protein subunit vaccines, DNA vaccines, RNA vaccines and some repurposed vaccines. Post announcement of the Global Vaccine Action Plan by the WHO, providing access to safe and efficacious vaccines to the larger population continues to be a huge challenge with respect to several countries. The need to develop, manufacture and market vaccines at an unparalleled speed required collaboration on several fronts. While licensing opportunities were abundant but companies required guarantees on several fronts. The urgency in the need to provide access and make available adequate doses has been a greatest challenge. An analysis of the licensing arrangements provides important insights into the domestic concerns, need for safeguarding IP and other commitments. The analysis of a few court cases based on licensing issues during the pandemic reveals core issues related to transfer of technology.

Keywords: Vaccines; vaccine licensing; Intellectual Property; technology transfer