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COVID-19 Vaccine Could Cost As Little As \$10 A Dose, Says Janssen

Full Global Access Not Expected Until Late 2021

by Andrew McConaghie

Non-profit approach is reassuring for healthcare payers, but vaccines won't be ready to stop pandemic at its peak.

Johnson & Johnson, one of the leading companies developing a vaccine against COVID-19, has become the first to estimate a likely cost, saying its product could be as cheap as “ten dollars or ten euros a dose”.

Paul Stoffels, chief scientific officer at the company's pharma division Janssen spoke to *De Tijd* newspaper in his native Belgium on 30 March, setting out his estimates of timelines for development and distribution of its vaccine to people around the world.

He expects full scale availability to the vaccine for millions of patients will come in late 2021.

His remarks should put to rest fears from healthcare systems that big pharma companies would seek to profit from COVID-19 vaccines – but also make clear realistic timelines, which mean vaccines won't arrive in time to prevent the pandemic continuing to take its terrible toll in countries around the world in 2020.

The company is collaborating with the US government agency BARDA (Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority) who on the same day announced a joint \$1bn funding of the vaccine development - with the company also making clear it was taking a non-profit approach to the product.

The partners also announced the selection of a lead vaccine candidate to go into development, with human clinical studies to start in September 2020 at the latest, with the first batches of a

COVID-19 vaccine potentially available for emergency use authorization (EUA) by early 2021.

Janssen is now looking to rapidly scale up its manufacturing capacity with the goal of eventually providing more than one billion doses of a vaccine globally.

"We are expecting hundreds of millions of people, that is, a broad population, to have access to the vaccine by the end of 2021 and in the course of 2022," Stoffels said.



PAUL STOFFELS AND THE JANSSEN VACCINE DEVELOPMENT TEAM IN LEIDEN, NETHERLANDS

On the question of cost, he added: "I expect a price of \$10 or €10 per vaccine. That's quite cheap. But it all depends on the output of our production lines, the worldwide availability of hypodermic needles and the ability to sterile fill hundreds of millions of those vaccines on site. "

Janssen was one of the first companies to respond to the emerging COVID-19 virus, beginning work on a vaccine candidate in January as soon as the novel coronavirus sequence became available. Its researchers collaborated with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, part of Harvard Medical School, to construct and test multiple vaccine candidates using Janssen's AdVac technology.

The company has also offered up its capabilities to screen potential therapeutic compounds to other

companies.

Asked if he had seen a great deal of solidarity as a result of the crisis, Stoffels said: "Nobody is untouched by this crisis. Every company is affected. While the world is largely at a standstill, our production is 100% active. I know few colleagues who now calculate what they could earn from corona. That is a very normal human response. We want vaccines and antiviral drugs to be available as soon as possible. "

As with other companies racing to develop a vaccine, J&J will provide the first supplies to frontline healthcare professionals who are risking their lives treating highly infectious COVID-19 patients.

Other companies developing vaccines include Moderna Therapeutics, whose mRNA-based candidate mRNA-1273 is currently the most advanced in the global pipeline.

Its chief executive Stéphane Bancel said the vaccine could be made available via EUA to frontline healthcare professional as early as the autumn.

Like Janssen, Moderna is also working with non-profit making bodies – the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the global Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). This means it is also likely to take a non-profit approach to the vaccine, but also faces major challenges in scaling up its manufacturing capacity for a global population. (Also see "[Moderna Not Immune To COVID-19 Effects On Trials](#)" - Scrip, 30 Mar, 2020.)

mRNA Vaccines – A Novel Weapon Against Coronavirus

By [Alex Shimmings](#)

23 Mar 2020

The arrival of SARS-CoV-2 has focused attention on a potential new way of making vaccines – one that promises to be quicker and cheaper than traditional methods and more reactive to novel virus outbreaks, but also one that remains to be validated.

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