

19 May 2020

**Frequently Asked Questions:
Global Solutions for Global Access for Covid-19 Diagnostics, Treatments & Vaccines**

What is Global Access?

Global access is also called “universal access”. Global access means that all countries in the world will have equitable access to all types of technologies to diagnose, treat or vaccinate against Covid-19, without being limited by their ability to pay. Currently, the international patent system allows companies to charge often high prices for their technologies, which prevents equitable access.

Why is Universal Access important?

Universal access is important to save lives for hundreds of millions of people who live in low-income or middle-income countries. Without universal access, they will not be able to pay for these life-saving technologies. As Covid-19 is truly global in scale and scope, we have to care for everyone everywhere, by providing equitable access. If only high-income countries can afford these technologies, the world will remain unsafe if hundreds of millions of people remain at risk.

Is Remdesivir effective in treating Covid–19?

Remdesivir is not yet approved in any country to treat Covid–19. There is not yet any conclusive evidence on the efficacy of Remdesivir on treating Covid–19, and it is not a “magic bullet”.

What is a Voluntary License Agreement?

Voluntary licenses (VL) are based on a mutual contractual agreement between a patent holder and a third party who is a generic manufacturer.

In this case, the patent-holder is Gilead Inc, which has allowed five generic manufacturers to produce Remdesivir and sell it to 127 countries. The list of countries in Gilead’s voluntary licensing agreement consist of nearly all low-income and lower-middle income countries, as well as several upper-middle- and high-income countries. It is unclear what the criteria was for selecting the countries for their VL. This is far from the equitable and global access that we are calling for.

How does this affect Malaysia?

Malaysia must be able to access the medicine from any manufacturer including the five generic companies that have signed the VL agreement with Gilead. It is not clear whether this would be possible since Malaysia is not listed as one of the 127 countries in the agreement. This VL arrangement falls short again from the equitable and global access we are calling for.

Can Malaysia still buy from other manufacturers?

As Remdesivir’s patent is not registered in Malaysia, Malaysia can still buy Remdesivir from Gilead or any manufacturer that fits Malaysia’s stringent regulations for drug registration. However, Gilead VL concerns 127 countries only and therefore will limit the sourcing options for Malaysia and other countries not included in the VL agreement. No country should be left out of a possible source of treatment for Covid–19.