

Address for correspondence:

ABPI Scotland

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Lewis Macdonald MSP
Convenor
Health and Sport Committee
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

22nd of April 2020

Dear Lewis,

I hope this finds you well. I wanted to send you a letter to provide some further information as to the work of the pharmaceutical industry during the current coronavirus pandemic.

ABPI and its members understand that the industry is uniquely placed to respond to the current crisis through the supply of medicine, the development of existing treatments and vaccines and the use of our diagnostic testing expertise. In addition to these efforts the industry has volunteered its own employees to help the NHS effort and have donated treatments and kit to our health service.

Delivering medicines and health technology to fight COVID-19

A significant number of our members are involved in various research and development efforts around the globe aimed at either repurposing existing medicines to treat Covid-19 or developing new treatments and vaccines.

The industry has mobilised at speed to combat the pandemic and a central theme of our work has been collaboration between companies, the NHS and academia. In some cases, this has meant sharing data and waving international patent rights. Closer to home and GSK, who have two manufacturing plants in Scotland, are making their adjuvant technology available to scientists and organisations working on candidate vaccines.

We know there's a lot of excitement about the potential for any new medicine to provide a solution to the pandemic, but we need to be very careful not to overplay the effectiveness of these options before strong clinical evidence can be gathered. The same goes for efforts to uncover a vaccine.

Whatever technology is used to create a vaccine, we need to be realistic about the timescales involved. New technologies have dramatically shortened the time it takes to decode viruses and develop potential vaccines, but there's no shortcut to the testing that's needed to make sure one is safe and effective. Patient safety must always remain the number one priority.

The industry recognises that its work will be central to life returning to normal. ABPI is constantly monitoring the R&D efforts of our members and regularly updates its website with examples of what is happening, globally, to combat the pandemic. This can be viewed [here](#).

If you have questions about specific efforts from our members or questions about the R&D process, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Prioritising the supply of diagnostics, medicines and health technologies for NHS patients

From the almost daily conversations I have with member companies and those working in the healthcare sector I can assure you that everyone is working incredibly hard to ensure patients can continue to access the medicines they need.

However, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the tremendous pressure increased patient demand is exerting on supply chains and manufacturing. Our members are prioritising getting medicines and health technologies to NHS patients and are working hard to mitigate any impacts on their global supply and manufacturing efforts.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry

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To relieve pressures on global supply chains, UK medicines suppliers have been asked by DHSC to carry out a risk assessment on the impact of COVID-19. The DHSC is working closely with industry, the NHS and others, and precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages.

We have a strong system in place between to prevent shortages, increase supplies and source alternative products - some from other parts of the world –all of which is happening right now.

To meet this unprecedented global demand from healthcare systems we need to continue to work closely together to identify and mitigate any issues as they arise.

Rolling out diagnostics to detect whether patients are genuinely infected with the new coronavirus is a key step in preventing or slowing its spread. However, the rapid spread of COVID-19 has drastically increased the demand for testing kits around the world, especially in the United States and Europe. Our members with interests in this area and testing facilities are making these available.

In addition to the individual contributions companies are already making, a consortium of life sciences companies announced an important collaboration in March to accelerate the development, manufacture, and delivery of vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments for COVID-19, alongside the Gates Foundation. Co-chaired by Vas Narasimhan, chief executive officer of Novartis, the consortium seeks out to accelerate solutions to this pandemic. More information about how the pharmaceutical industry manages supply can be found [here](#).

Supporting NHS service delivery

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, our members have made clear their desire to assist the NHS and government agencies in any way possible. This has ranged from delivering vital medicines and health technologies to offering the services of their employees including both clinical staff and volunteers. If you would like to read more about what ABPI members are doing and how we are mobilising volunteers, further information can be found on our website [here](#).

I hope this update provides some further information on the work of the pharmaceutical industry, both in Scotland, and across the world to combat the Coronavirus pandemic.

In times like these it is vital that all parts of the system collaborate and work together to offer solutions. Thus far this has worked well and if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Culpan

Director ABPI Scotland

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