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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

14 – 18 MARCH 2022

EU TO PRIORITISE EVACUATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN IN URGENT NEED OF CARE

EU health ministers agreed on Tuesday (15 March) to first evacuate from Ukraine children in urgent need of care, following talks of a coordinated EU approach to the health crisis in the country.

In France, the regional health agencies will identify reception capacities, especially in paediatric services and in the medico-social sector. “We are in the process of formulating an initial proposal to facilitate evacuations, particularly of children with cancer, we are in discussion with Kyiv and Poland,” said French Health Minister Olivier Véran, whose country holds the rotating EU Council presidency.

Vaccination of children is another issue that EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides brought up. According to the Ukrainian public health centre, around 80% of children are vaccinated against polio – not enough to achieve immunity. Kyriakides said children will be vaccinated through HERA (the EU’s Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority) against diseases such as tuberculosis and polio.

EU ministers confirmed that they had enough doses to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to refugees.

Source: https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/informal-video-conference-of-health-ministers-15-march-2022/

COMPROMISE REACHED ON COVID-19 VACCINE IP RIGHTS WAIVER

The EU, South Africa, India and the U.S. have reached a compromise in long-running negotiations on a waiver on intellectual property rights for coronavirus products, according to a document seen by POLITICO.

Supporters of a waiver argue that it would have led to a significant increase in the production of coronavirus products during the pandemic and could have saved many lives. It would, in effect, have freed up producers to replicate coronavirus vaccines, tests and diagnostics without fear of infringing on pharmaceutical companies' patents. Until the end of last year, coronavirus vaccines were in short supply, with many poorer countries, particularly in Africa, having almost no access to vaccines.

Under the compromise, which currently only covers vaccines, developing countries that have exported less than 10 percent of the world's coronavirus vaccine doses in 2021 would be able to authorize the use of a patented coronavirus vaccine without the owner of the patent's consent. The solution is purportedly much broader than compulsory licensing, an alternative proposal that would allow countries to use means such as executive orders to ramp up vaccine production.

Source: https://www.politico.eu/article/compromise-reached-on-covid-19-vaccine-intellectual-property-rights-waiver/

EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY: THERE IS NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR A SECOND COVID-19 BOOSTER

There is not yet enough evidence to justify additional COVID-19 boosters, according to the European Medical Authority (EMA) Head of Vaccine Strategy Marco Cavaleri, while BioNTech Pfizer have already applied for authorisation for additional jabs in the US.

The situation is different when it comes to elderly and immunosuppressed people. Another study from Israel showed that the second booster dose, given at least up to five months from the first booster, in an elderly population reduced hospitalisations, Cavaleri said.

In the meantime, vaccine developers, Germany's BioNTech and US pharma giant Pfizer, are confident that their vaccine's additional fourth dose is needed. On March 15 , BioNTech Pfizer applied for authorisation to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for Emergency Use Authorisation of an additional booster dose for adults 65 and older who have received an initial booster of any of the authorised or approved COVID-19 vaccines.

According to Cavalieri, the EMA hasn't received any application for a second booster dose so far.

Source: https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/ema-says-not-enough-evidence-for-a-second-covid-booster/

Thank you for your attention!

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