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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

8 OCTOBER – 14 OCTOBER 2022

WHO AND ECDC ISSUE NEW WARNING OVER WINTER COVID WAVE AND A FLU SURGE

On Wednesday (12 October), the World Health Organization and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said another wave of coronavirus may have begun to tick up across the region, while flu cases are also expected to rise. The indicators are again rising across the continent, suggesting another wave of infections has begun.

Data collected by the WHO Regional Office for Europe showed that only Europe recorded a rise in COVID-19 cases in the week ended 2 October, clocking an increase of 8% compared to the prior week. The experts warn that the uptake of boosters in the region will likely be limited due to vaccine fatigue and confusion over currently available vaccines.

ECDC and WHO noted that millions across the continent remain unvaccinated against COVID-19. In this regard, they urge all European countries to effectively administer COVID-19 both flu and COVID-19 vaccines, preparing for an expected surge in cases of seasonal influenza.

WHO's Europe director Hans Hluge and ECDC's director Andrea Simon issued a joint statement in which they said that "although we are not where we were one year ago, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is still not over." Both directors underlined that "there is no time to lose," adding that vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, people over 60 years old, and those with co-morbidities, should get vaccinated against both viruses.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3Mwgk8M>

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ACCUSES TEVA PHARMACEUTICALS OF MISUSING IP TO BLOCK RIVAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS DRUGS

On Monday (10 October), the EU executive body formally adopted a Statement of Objections (“SO”) against Teva over alleged abuse of dominance concerning its blockbuster drug Copaxone, used in the treatment of multiple sclerosis. The Israeli multinational company is accused of breaching intellectual property rules to delay competition across the pond.

The allegations resulted from unannounced inspections conducted at a number of Teva-affiliated companies back in October 2019. Subsequently, in March 2021, the EU Commission “initiated proceedings” against Teva Pharmaceuticals Ltd., accusing it of deploying a “divisionals game” to falsely extend Copaxone’s patents by filing and withdrawing secondary patent applications.

Parallely, the EU is also accusing Teva of running a “disparagement campaign,” in which it allegedly created doubt about the safety and efficacy of a rival generic. It is worth noting that Teva still has an opportunity to defend itself, in writing and an oral hearing. Nevertheless, if the Commission eventually sides against the Israeli company, it may decide to fine Teva up to 10 percent of its annual global sales.

“If confirmed, Teva’s behaviour would not only harm competitors and patients, but also inflate public health spending on certain multiple sclerosis treatments, which for Copaxone alone amounts to up to €500 million per year in the EU,” the Commission said in a statement.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6062

EUROSTAT CALCULATED HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN GET TO THE HOSPITAL QUICKLY FROM THEIR HOME

Eurostat decided to undergo the calculations in an unusual way – namely, it estimated how many Europeans live within a 15-minute drive to the hospital. The data is up-to-date for 2020. The results are surprising – in some spheres, several regions in Poland were among the leaders.

According to Eurostat's estimations, in 2020, inhabitants of 129 out of 1166 regions of the European Union could get to the hospital within 15 minutes by car, so slightly more than 10 percent of regions selected for the needs of research. Of course, most of the 129 geographical zones were capital or urban areas with a high population density.

On the other hand, less than 50 percent of inhabitants were permanently located within a 15-minute drive to the nearest hospital in 89 regions. These are rather poorly populated regions, often on the periphery of the community – both in the south and the east of Europe. In this context, Eurostat refers to areas in the interior of Portugal and Spain, as well as in rural areas in Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia.

Looking more into detail, there were 11 regions where less than 10 percent of inhabitants lived within a 15-minute drive of the hospital. Five were in Poland (Częstochowski, Bytomski, Gliwicki, Rybicki, and Tyski), four in Romania, and two others in Sweden.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20221010-1>

Thank you for your attention!

ul. J.P. Woronicza 3 lok. 254

02-640 Warszawa

tel./fax: +48 22 749 13 13

e-mail: visiongroup@visiongroup.pl

www.visiongroup.pl



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