

U.S. physicians seek help for other countries battling COVID-19

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Kevin B. O'Reilly

News Editor

With fewer than 3 billion SARS-CoV-2 vaccine doses administered worldwide and COVID-19 ravaging countries such as India and Brazil, delegates took action during the June 2021 AMA Special Meeting to promote equitable distribution of resources in response to the pandemic.

“COVID-19 is a public health and humanitarian crisis,” said AMA Board Chair-elect Bobby Mukkamala, MD. “Even as we in the United States have easy access to vaccines, physicians and numerous organizations across the globe—particularly in low- and middle-income countries—are still risking their lives fighting COVID-19 in conditions where hospital capacity is strained, medical supplies are diminished and community spread is rampant.

“The situation is dire, giving rise to new, more transmissible, more dangerous variants, and global cooperation to ensure equitable distribution of resources is essential to defeating COVID-19,” Dr. Mukkamala added. “The situation may seem to be getting better here, but in a global pandemic, threats abroad can quickly become threats in the United States and set us all back.”

Given urgent global needs, the House of Delegates directed the AMA to:

- Explore possible assistance through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access initiative co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, as well as all other relevant organizations, for residents of countries with limited financial or technological resources.
- Work with governmental and appropriate regulatory bodies to encourage prioritization of equity when providing COVID-19 pandemic-related resources, such as diagnostics, low-cost or free medications, therapeutics, vaccines, raw materials for vaccine production, personal protective equipment or financial support.
- Recognize the extraordinary efforts of many dedicated physicians, physician and ethnic organizations assisting in this COVID-19 pandemic humanitarian crisis.

The AMA also will support WHO efforts to increase production and distribution of the medicines and

vaccines needed to fight COVID-19. To help boost COVID-19 vaccination in low- and middle-income countries, delegates voted to support:

- | A temporary waiver of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property agreement and other relevant intellectual property protections.
- | Technological transfers relevant for vaccine production.
- | Other support, financial and otherwise, necessary to scale up global vaccine manufacturing.
- | Measures that ensure the safety and efficacy of products manufactured by such means.

Read about the other highlights from the June 2021 AMA Special Meeting.