

Challenging the IP Protection Framework

A little over a year ago, COVID-19 had not yet been declared a pandemic. Even so, an [overuse of intellectual property \(IP\) protection](#) already constituted a serious obstacle for access to certain medicines and health technologies. The problems we face today have their roots and origins in a number of shortcomings and limitations of the current research and development (R&D) model. On Wednesday 17 March 2021, we were joined by an expert panel to discuss the need for, and possible approaches to, reforming the current IP protection framework so we can better address these problems. This blog is based on HAI Senior Policy Advisor, Jaume Vidal's opening remarks to that event.

As recently as 2017, [activists were still pressing](#) pharmaceutical companies to lower the price for pneumonia vaccines, a disease that kills one million children every year. And COVID-19 seemed a like something happening far away in January 2020 when the [Netherlands was accused by the US Embassy](#) in The Hague of trying to breach international law for considering the use of compulsory licensing. Now, weaknesses in the global health governance system and the deadlock at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have worsened with the current emergency. It is increasingly clear that there is a misalignment between health priorities and research conducted by private pharmaceutical companies, excessive importance of IP protection considerations over health needs and a lack of transparency over prices and other relevant information, like development costs and clinical trial data.

We are challenging the current IP protection framework because we believe that the current regime, both globally and locally, has failed to deliver on its promises. That is why we believe that business as usual is not acceptable. We support the [COVID-19 Technology Access Pool](#) (C-TAP) since its inception, and we will push for a [TRIPS waiver](#) until it is approved. We are proud to be part of the European Citizens' Initiative, [Right to Cure](#), to guarantee public return on public investment and transparency in R&D.

We are not here to complain or whine. We have gathered to find solutions.