

Guidelines for socially responsible management of innovation

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Public money plays a pivotal role in the development of new health technologies. The European research framework programme [Horizon 2020](#), for example, dedicated €7.5 billion between 2014 and 2020 to publicly-funded health research in Europe, of which €1.6 billion alone flowed into the [Innovative Medicines Initiative](#).

But public funding neither guarantees that medical health technologies brought to market meet priority health needs nor are priced affordably if they do. Patents—which confer temporary market exclusivity to an inventor of a new medical product—are often seen as the only way to incentivise research.

But market exclusivities keep prices high, which can hinder access and place undue pressure on public health services. And they incentivise primarily research that serves high-income markets, neglecting diseases that disproportionately impact low- and middle income countries as well as critical issue areas such as the need for new antimicrobial medicines.

Public money can and must be used more strategically. “Medicines should be priced such that the public does not pay twice for innovation: first through government funded scientific research and then through high medicine prices,” noted the Lancet Commission on Essential Medicines for Universal Health Coverage in 2017.¹ Universities and research institutions “that receive public funding must prioritise public health objectives over financial returns in their patenting and licensing practices,” agreed a United Nations High Level Panel on Access to Medicines in 2016.

Socially responsible management of innovation can be used to address several gaps that currently limit the contribution of publicly-financed research to the public good. An outline of several actions institutions can take to fill these gaps is in the attached brochure.

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