



statement

Global biopharmaceutical industry early response to Omicron

3 December 2021 - COVID-19, the worst pandemic the world has seen in 100 years, has shown us that we cannot let our guard down. The global biopharmaceutical industry understands the concern caused by the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 since it was declared a [variant of concern by the World Health Organization](#).

As a science-driven industry addressing some of the world's biggest healthcare challenges, the biopharmaceutical industry has demonstrated over the last two years how it is uniquely positioned to [respond rapidly to COVID-19](#). Biopharmaceutical companies are bringing the same commitment to innovation in responding to the Omicron variant.

It is early days in terms of understanding Omicron. Together with the broader scientific community, public health and regulatory bodies around the world, our industry will again bring its experience and expertise to bear on new variants such as Omicron.

None of this work would have been possible if the South African and Botswana scientists had not shared the Omicron variant so swiftly through tried and tested platforms such as [GISAID](#). Their fast sharing of the data has bought us all time in responding to and potentially controlling this new variant. The current situation reflects the advantage of fast and effective sharing of harmful pathogens and variants, which allows us to develop effective vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics.

Biopharmaceutical companies have hit the ground running in response to the Omicron variant, as they have done with previous variants (Beta and Delta). Crucially, they are looking at how both authorized and unapproved vaccines and treatments can stand up to this latest variant. A number of vaccine developers have already stated that they will develop Omicron targeting candidates.

The emergence of Omicron variant comes on top of a surge in COVID-19 cases in many regions of the world, caused by the dominant Delta variant at a time when health systems are already working hard to cope with seasonal endemic infections. Reducing the toll of the pandemic on lives and livelihoods requires not only continued innovation in the development and production of vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics, but also urgently addressing inequality in vaccine distribution and country readiness for vaccination. Our [Five Steps to urgently advance COVID-19 vaccine equity](#) announced in May 2021 are as relevant and as demanding of action today as they were when they were first launched.

Resource: Five Steps to urgently advance COVID-19 vaccine equity/Step 5: "Drive further innovation" ("[Drive Further Innovation](#)" tab – "[view more](#)" to see timeline of company announcements)