

World Health Organization issues new treatment recommendations for the clinical management of COVID-19

Basel, 7 July 2021

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued new treatment recommendations for the clinical management of COVID-19, which recommend interleukin-6 (IL-6) receptor blockers for patients hospitalised with severe or critical COVID-19.

The WHO's new guidance on interleukin-6 (IL)-6 receptor blockers is an important development for patients hospitalised with severe or critical COVID-19.

Roche's IL-6 receptor blocker, Actemra/RoActemra® (tocilizumab), whilst not approved for the treatment of COVID-19 in any country, has been widely used during this pandemic in the course of medical practice, and demand for this medicine has increased significantly at a global level.

Bearing this in mind, and seeing the impact the pandemic continues to have, our teams are working around the clock to make Actemra/RoActemra available as quickly and widely as possible, whilst managing considerable supply challenges. We have increased our own production capacity significantly and have been working with external manufacturers on transferring our technologies to further increase global supply.

Despite all these efforts, it may still not be enough to meet the unprecedented demand for Actemra/RoActemra. Roche and Chugai (who are both holders of Actemra/RoActemra-related patents) have therefore decided not to assert any patents against the use of Actemra/RoActemra in COVID-19 in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) during this current pandemic, which will provide legal certainty for biologic manufacturers.

At the same time, we strongly believe that robust intellectual property (IP) systems are a prerequisite for innovation and improving treatments for the benefit of every human being and society as a whole. IP protection is mandatory to address the huge healthcare challenges the world is facing - also beyond COVID-19. It has been the basis for the industry's quick and comprehensive response to the challenges of the pandemic – an unprecedented success of healthcare innovation.

We are working closely with the WHO on the implications of this guideline and on mechanisms (WHO Pre-Qualification) that may enhance access in LMICs. We stand together with society, governments, healthcare providers and all those working towards the common goal of overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we are continuing to discuss the clinical trials of Actemra/RoActemra to date with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency and other health authorities.

About Roche

Roche is a global pioneer in pharmaceuticals and diagnostics focused on advancing science to improve people's lives. The combined strengths of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics, as well as growing capabilities in the area of data-driven medical insights help Roche deliver truly personalised healthcare. Roche is working with partners across the healthcare sector to provide the best care for each person.

Roche is the world's largest biotech company, with truly differentiated medicines in oncology, immunology, infectious diseases, ophthalmology and diseases of the central nervous system. Roche is also the world leader in in vitro diagnostics and tissue-based cancer diagnostics, and a frontrunner in diabetes management. In recent years, Roche has invested in genomic profiling and real-world data partnerships and has become an industry-leading partner for medical insights.

Founded in 1896, Roche continues to search for better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases and make a sustainable contribution to society. The company also aims to improve patient access to medical innovations by working with all relevant stakeholders. More than thirty medicines developed by Roche are included in the World Health Organization Model Lists of Essential Medicines, among them life-saving antibiotics, antimalarials and cancer medicines. Moreover, for the twelfth consecutive year, Roche has been recognised as one of the most sustainable companies in the Pharmaceuticals Industry by the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI).

The Roche Group, headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, is active in over 100 countries and in 2020 employed more than 100,000 people worldwide. In 2020, Roche invested CHF 12.2 billion in R&D and posted sales of CHF 58.3 billion. Genentech, in the United States, is a wholly owned member of the Roche Group. Roche is the majority shareholder in Chugai Pharmaceutical, Japan. For more information, please visit www.roche.com.

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