PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

WS303

ASSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO COVID19 VACCINES, TREATMENTS, & HEALTH RESOURCES

| BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark window into the how social and economic inequities result in disproportionate risk and impact of novel diseases. The chronic lack of access to basic health care prior to a pandemic results in populations more likely to be living with “pre-existing conditions” that make them more vulnerable to the most serious consequences of a novel infectious disease. This lack of effective health services in marginalized communities further increases their risks of negative outcomes during the pandemic. Economic inequities also profoundly reduce timely access to diagnostics and life-saving medicines (i.e. vaccines and therapies) – once they become available. This dynamic is particularly evident between resource “rich” and “poor” countries when it comes to accessing life-saving products that are in high demand when supplies are limited, including vaccines, therapeutics and personal protective equipment. These inequalities underscore the importance of universal health coverage in developing a uniformly healthy population before a pandemic, and mechanisms being in place for equitable provision of vaccines, therapies and PPEs during a pandemic. Moreover, vulerable populations will be impacted by pandemic induced impacts on education and nutrition programs. Topics to be discussed in this session include:

- Impact of inequitable access to basic health services on population health profile
- Global access to treatments and vaccines. How effective treatments and vaccines will be made available to everyone who needs them.
- The role of Universal Health Coverage in building: healthier populations (with fewer underlying conditions) that are less vulnerable to infectious disease threats; normative health systems and capacities that ensure delivery of critical services in the face of a pandemic
- How we ethically address access to therapeutics and vaccines? COVID vaccine development will be a major issue and there are also issues of the lack of ‘true partnership’ between funders and organizers around the world. How are major powers weighing in on this?
- How to ensure a unified global health approach, including access to education and nutriion, to address the most vulnerable in the world.
- How the growing power struggles between key countries on commodities affect equitable access to life saving interventions?

| OBJECTIVES

By participating in this webinar with global experts you will:

- Learn about the concerted effort to assure equitable global access to COVID19 vaccines and life-saving therapeutics
- Gain insight into the ethical considerations in rationing and prioritizing resources
- Understand the importance of nutrition, especially for vulnerable populations



Moderator

Helen Rees

Executive Director

Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute, University of Witwatersrand
South Africa

Professor Helen Rees is one of South Africa's best-respected clinician-scientists and is internationally renowned for her research and policy work in HIV, vaccines, reproductive health and drug regulation. She is founder and Executive Director of the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI) which is the University of Witwatersrand's largest research institution. She is also Personal Professor in the Wits Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department and Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Wits African Leadership In Vaccinology Excellence (ALIVE). Helen is an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases, an Honorary Fellow of Murray Edwards College, Cambridge University (UK) and an alumnus of Harvard Business School (USA). Helen's global reputation has meant that many international global health organisations have recruited her to serve on and/or chair international scientific committees and Boards. In South Africa Helen Chairs the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority Board, co-chairs the SA Health Data Advisory and Coordination Committee, is a member of SA's National Advisory Group on Immunization, and a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the SA National Institute of Communicable Diseases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Helen has been appointed to several South African Ministerial Committees that inform the Minister of Health on COVID-19 matters, namely the Research Team, Therapeutics Team and the National Essential Medicine Therapeutics Sub-Committee and most recently the COVID-19 Vaccines Committee. She has been Chair of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Emergency Committee on Polio since 2014. Helen has made many scientific strategic and policy contributions to the African region. She currently Chairs the WHO's African Regional Task Force on Immunization. She Co-Chair's the WHO Working Group on Ebola Vaccines and is a member of the WHO's IHR Emergency Committee on Ebola. Helen Chaired the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization for many years, which is WHO's overarching global advisory committee for vaccines and immunisation. She has recently been appointed to the SAGE Working Group COVID-19 Vaccine Committee as well as onto the WHO IHR Emergency Committee for COVID-19. She is a member of the Facilitation Committee in the COVID19 Clinical Research Coalition. Helen Chairs the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) Programme and Policy Committee and serves on the Gavi Board and Chairs the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI)'s Scientific Advisory Committee and serves on CEPI's Board. She has received numerous national and international awards for her contribution to science and to the South African, African and global health sectors. Among these, she is an Officer of the British Empire awarded for her contribution to global health and received the Order of the Baobab, one of South Africa's highest honours, for her contribution to the health of women and children.