



Pfizer, Moderna raise prices of their mRNA coronavirus vaccines to extract yet more profits from the pandemic

Description

Vaccine makers Pfizer and Moderna raised the prices of their mRNA Wuhan coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines in their latest European Union supply contracts. The price increases came as the EU faced disruptions in vaccine supply and the spread of the more infectious B16172 delta variant. Despite the higher prices charged by the two companies, the European Commission said the bloc is on course to fully vaccinate at least 70 percent of its adult population by the end of summer. The price of Pfizer's BNT162b2 COVID-19 vaccine dose increased to 19.50 euros (US\$23.16), according to [supply contracts](#) obtained by the *Financial Times*. The new price was four euros higher than its earlier price of €15.50 (US\$18.41).

The contracts also reflected a price increase for Moderna's mRNA-1273 vaccine to 21.48 euros (US\$25.50) per dose. This final price was higher than the 19 euros (US\$22.57) price in the first procurement deal. However, an official close to the matter said the current price was lower than the previously agreed US\$28.50 price per dose because the order had grown.

The same official said both Pfizer and Moderna "capitalized on their market value" during the supply negotiations. "Vaccines work so they increased the 'value,'" they said, adding that both companies deployed "the usual pharma rhetoric." The *FT* report noted that Pfizer increased the price of its vaccine by more than 25 percent, while Moderna increased the price of its COVID-19 shot by more than 10 percent.

The EU's supply contracts, which amounted to a total of 2.1 billion vaccine doses until 2023, were first struck in 2021. However, the supply contracts' terms were renegotiated after clinical trial data showed the mRNA vaccines had higher efficacy rates against the delta variant compared to the viral vector vaccines by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. The EU earlier suspended the use of the latter vaccines due to their suspected link to blood clots in some patients.

Pushing booster shots to boost vaccine makers' profits

According to forecasts by life sciences consultancy firm Airfinity, the revenue gap between mRNA

vaccines and traditional vaccines that contain either viral proteins or an inactivated virus is set to widen in 2022. It predicts sales of Pfizer's BNT162b2 vaccine, made in partnership with the German company BioNTech, will hit \$56 billion. Meanwhile, sales of Moderna's mRNA-1273 vaccine are projected to reach \$30 billion.

On the other hand, Airfinity projects that sales of the AstraZeneca jab will increase to \$15 billion in 2022. AstraZeneca's vaccine, made in partnership with the [University of Oxford](#), is the vaccine most commonly supplied to low-income countries.

The threat of the delta variant also opened up the possibility of booster shots as a way to increase immunity against the more infectious strain. True enough, some companies jumped at the opportunity for more profits. (Related: [Israel finds Pfizer vaccine only 39 percent effective against delta variant, meaning that fully vaccinated people can still spread covid.](#))

Back in April 2021, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said inoculated people [will "likely" need vaccine booster shots](#) every year to maintain immunity against SARS-CoV-2 and its variants. He said that time: "It is extremely important to suppress the pool of people that can be susceptible to the virus."

Bourla elaborated that there are vaccines for diseases such as polio "where one dose is enough" and other vaccines that are needed on a yearly basis such as the one for flu. He added that the COVID-19 vaccine falls under the second category, adding that SARS-CoV-2 "looks more like the influenza virus than the polio virus."

BioNTech Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ozlem Tureci [agreed with Bourla's remarks](#) toward vaccine boosters during a separate interview in April 2021. She told *CNBC* host Kelly Evans that month that people getting COVID-19 booster shots every year – similar to the flu vaccine – is expected.

Tureci told Evans that scientists expect vaccine immunity against the virus to decrease over time. "We see indications for this also in the induced [response], but also the natural immune response against SARS-CoV-2. We see this waning of immune responses also in people who were just infected, and therefore [it's] also expected with the [COVID-19] vaccines," she said. (Related: "Booster" shots really mean it's a way to BOOST Big Pharma's profits... It's all about repeat business, not immunity, because if it were about immunity, then NATURAL immunity would count.)

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