

**Imperial College Union
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ICU's Stance on Access to Medicines**

Author: Rishi Miriyala Anantharaj (Universities Allied for Essential Medicines UK & Imperial Lead)

Seconders: Anson To, ICU Deputy President (Welfare)
Rama Aowidah, Students for Global Health Imperial Chair
Doras Tin, UG Student in Faculty of Medicine
Shedrack Nwaokocha, PGT AWO - Medicine
Catherine James, Council Representative (UG Medicine)
Julia Mitra, ICU Ethics & Environment Officer
Sarah Azam, ICSMSU President

Decision: To approve

Union Notes

1. Approximately 2 billion people lack access to essential medicines, disproportionately affecting low- and middle-income countries [1].
2. Millions of people die each year from treatable or preventable diseases, largely due to barriers in access to medicines and health technologies [1].
3. Universities generate a significant portion of early-stage medical innovation, often publicly funded, forming the foundation of the pharmaceutical R&D pipeline [2].
4. Imperial College London patents biomedical technologies that are subsequently licensed to pharmaceutical companies, demonstrating its influence on medicine access paths.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted universities' critical role in vaccine, diagnostic and therapeutic development, exposing inequities in global access to publicly funded tools [3].
6. Imperial College London is a founding member of TenU, the Ten-University partnership developing best practice in technology transfer and socially responsible licensing [4].
7. The Affordable Access Plan (AAP), as published by the international student-led organisation Universities Allied for Essential Medicines and its collaborators, Medicines Patents Pool, provides a framework to ensure socially responsible licensing to ensure fair access to medicines. [5]
8. Several major universities have implemented global access or socially responsible licensing principles with the Affordable Access Plan (AAP), including UCLA and UC Berkeley [6,7].
9. Non-exclusive licensing expands access and ensures public benefit of intellectual property, particularly in low- and middle-income markets [8].
10. A previous, now expired, motion was passed by Union Council on the ICU's stance on access to medicines [9].

Union Believes

1. Global access to publicly funded research outputs is a moral obligation.

2. Research should be evaluated on global public benefit in addition to commercialisation potential.
3. Transparency in research and clinical trials is essential.
4. Students should be educated about global health inequity and neglected diseases.
5. Researchers must understand socially responsible licensing and access issues.
6. Universities have a role in pandemic preparedness and equitable access.
7. The existence of Imperial's Technology Transfer Office and Imperial's role in TenU creates an institutional responsibility for leadership in access to research outputs.
8. Access-oriented licensing of medicines aligns with Imperial's global mission [10].

Union Resolves

1. To lobby for Imperial College London to sign onto the Affordable Access Plan (AAP) as published by Universities Allied for Essential Medicines and its collaborators, Medicines Patents Pool, or develop an alternative following similar principles.
2. To facilitate discourse between Imperial College London Technology Transfer Office and interested student groups and/or non-governmental organisations regarding licensing practices and policies.
3. To lobby for the inclusion of neglected diseases, access to medicines and global health equity on all relevant course curriculums, particularly those in the Department of Life Sciences, School of Public Health and Faculty of Medicine.
4. To lobby for collaboration between Imperial College London, its partners, particularly those within TenU, and student groups and/or non-governmental organisations in producing socially responsible licensing practices and policies, including the AAP.

References

¹<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241512442>

²<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12482104/#:~:text=In%20the%20U.S.%2C%20academic%20institutions,reported%20in%202013%20%5B8%5D>.

³<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17441692.2025.2528072?af=R>

⁴<https://www.ten-u.org/about/>

⁵https://medicinespatentpool.org/uploads/2024/09/MPP_Affordable-Access-Plan-One-Page.pdf

⁶<https://www.uaem.org/news/how-ucla-students-persisted-and-won>

⁷<https://www.uaem.org/news/berkeley-aap>

⁸<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10496684/>

⁹<https://eactivities.union.ic.ac.uk/upfiles/committeemeetingpaper/6244>

¹⁰<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/annual-report/imperial-in-202324/mission/>