

World Health Organization's declaration that COVID-19 is no longer a global health emergency: MedTech Europe's response

On 5 May 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 no longer represents a global health emergency. Marking this major milestone, now is the time to reflect how we can implement our lessons learned and collectively move forward.

Firstly, we must acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 has had globally on people's livelihoods, and their health- the aftermath will be long felt throughout our society. The enormous role played by healthcare professionals in responding to this crisis will not go unnoticed - their dedication, and commitment to provide care during these challenging times played a key role in controlling the impact.

The medical technology industry also played a key role at the forefront in fighting the virus by providing necessary medical equipment and supplies. Whether by testing those who may have contracted COVID-19, providing protective equipment to ensure that healthcare professionals can work safely, through life-saving ventilators or injectables for vaccines, medical technologies were crucial in tackling the virus.

However, the pandemic highlighted frailties in Europe's preparedness to respond to public health crises. It severely tested the capacity of the European health systems to scale up care rapidly. It saw Europe struggle to meet the demand for critical materials impacting the availability of medical technologies. It also reminded us that planning for future public health crises should be pursued as a European endeavour based on solidarity and involving the European Commission, Member States, and health stakeholders.

Looking forward, many valuable lessons around crisis preparedness and crisis management can be applied. Investment in the public workforce must improve so that healthcare professionals are ready and agile to cope with the challenges of a potential future health crisis. True EU resilience lies in having a fit-for-purpose regulatory system as well as a wide and diverse number of supply chains and sources for needed components and raw materials. Finally, the EU has a strong governance role to play. The likes of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) and the new role of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) must have an open dialogue with the medical technology sector to better prepare for future health emergencies.

COVID-19 has reminded us there is a lot to do for Europe to become truly resilient in the face of a global pandemic. One thing is clear, through closer cooperation between all stakeholders, we can ensure that Europe is properly prepared and capable to deliver the best possible outcomes for patients and communities.

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About MedTech Europe

MedTech Europe is the European trade association for the medical technology industry including diagnostics, medical devices and digital health. Our members are national, European and multinational companies as well as a network of national medical technology associations who research, develop, manufacture, distribute and supply health-related technologies, services and solutions.

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