

COVID-19: Governments must stop vaccine cost secrecy

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Globally affordable COVID-19 vaccines will not be accessible until governments stop allowing vaccine companies to keep their manufacturing costs secret, according to a new paper published by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*.

Billions in funding from taxpayers and governments in countries including the US and European Union has been so extensive that there is little investment or sunk [costs](#) for the [vaccine](#) companies to recover, except those associated with manufacturing.

Lead author Professor Donald Light, a professor of comparative health policy at the Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine in the US, said: "Contrary to the ethics of vaccines as a [public health](#) good, companies have kept manufacturing costs to themselves, and only a few independent studies have researched them in detail."

Drawing on previous studies, the authors estimate that the net manufacturing costs for 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine ready for shipping appear to range from US\$ 0.54 to US\$ 0.98. Light commented: "A recent study of costs for adenoviral Covid-19 vaccines estimates substantially lower costs, and a detailed study of mRNA vaccines estimates the unit cost is US\$ 2.85 for Moderna and US\$ 1.18 for Pfizer."

Light said: "Given that these [cost estimates](#) include the sustainability of facilities, [production lines](#), equipment and all manufacturing personnel, sustainable vaccine prices with a modest profit margin should be marginally more than the production costs. Yet prices charged countries range from US\$ 2.15-5.25 for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and US\$ 14.70-25.50 for the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines."

Light added: "Companies expect to charge many times more after they exercise their right to declare the pandemic is over. These higher prices, despite discounts and tiered pricing for middle- and lower-income countries, are likely to prolong the global pandemic."

"Governments must stop being partners in secrecy, and as purchasers they should demand public, verifiable reports on net costs, after direct

and indirect taxpayers' subsidies, in order to set globally affordable cost-plus prices for these global public health goods."

More information: Donald W Light et al, The costs of coronavirus vaccines and their pricing, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/01410768211053006](https://doi.org/10.1177/01410768211053006)

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