

Tekst 8

Editorial

Vaccines for all

We need to make sure poor countries won't lose out in a flu pandemic

- 1 PLAGUES have always haunted humanity, but for the first time we have the technology to watch the next one emerging – and maybe even stop it. We can, but this week it's looking unlikely that we will, as our ability to track bird flu is held hostage to the fears and ideologies of a divided planet.
- 2 As we have reported before (*New Scientist*, 17 february, p8), Indonesia, the country where H5N1 flu is now most prevalent, is refusing to send samples of the virus from human cases to the World Health Organization. Scientists need these samples to track the virus's evolution and pass the results to vaccine makers. If they cannot do this, we are all at risk if a human pandemic emerges.
- 3 Indonesia's point is that it is too poor to buy any vaccine produced from its virus. So it is bargaining its lone, sad chip – the virus that is killing its people – in a bid for vaccine plants of its own. Meanwhile, rich countries and vaccine makers protest that viruses must be shared freely – until they patent the products made from them, of course.
- 4 So we have an impasse, and a meeting this week at the WHO in Geneva to deal with the crisis cannot resolve the profound inequality of wealth at its heart. Yet we need a solution.
- 5 There has been much appeal to international law. Yet neither the Convention on Biological Diversity, which gives nations sovereignty over their genetic resources, nor the WHO's International Health Regulations, which require countries to share information on diseases, applies unambiguously. What is clear is that no system based exclusively on the old idols of free markets and national sovereignty can solve this problem.
- 6 Some say the solution is to recognise the sovereign rights of countries over any genes on their territory – allowing them to say who can use them, and name their price. For a pathogen like H5N1 this is not a good idea. Genetic sovereignty was meant to protect organisms, such as medicinal plants, that nations had bred or developed, not to 37 a recent, deadly invader. Giving the temporary home of a germ exclusive rights to award licences to vaccine companies will most likely lead to vaccine development being concentrated in even fewer hands than it is now.
- 7 Yet the unfairness claimed by Indonesia is real, and we must find a way to get vaccines to poorer countries. The pandemics of TB and HIV may provide answers. Here, public-private partnerships and other hybrid organisations are forming that are not driven by large profits. They are starting to organise Research and Development globally, to develop drugs and vaccines cooperatively and to distribute them fairly.
- 8 The delegates in Geneva need just such fresh solutions. A good goal for this week would be to launch a process for creating them. Then everyone must start once again sharing viruses in test tubes, before we are sharing them on the wind. ●

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- 2p **34** Geef van elk van de volgende stellingen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van alinea 1.
- 1 Science has now made it possible to follow bird flu from its earliest stages.
 - 2 Nowadays epidemics tend to spread more widely, with more serious implications.
 - 3 Investigation into bird flu is being hampered by issues outside the scope of science.
 - 4 Scientists are on the brink of discovering the know-how to put an end to bird flu.
- Noteer het nummer van elke stelling, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.
- 1p **35** Which of the following is true, judging from paragraphs 2 and 3?
- A At present the bird flu vaccine is still far from effective.
 - B Indonesia is powerless to stop the bird flu from spreading past its borders.
 - C Indonesia is using the bird flu virus as a negotiating tool.
 - D Poor people are more susceptible to bird flu than rich people are.
- 1p **36** What is the function of “and a ... its heart” (at the beginning of paragraph 4)?
- A To indicate the deeper problem underlying the impasse mentioned in the same paragraph.
 - B To point to the consequences of the impasse mentioned in the same paragraph.
 - C To shed new light on the risks involved in the impasse mentioned in the same paragraph.
- 1p **37** Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 6?
- A confer profitability on
 - B enlarge the impact of
 - C trivialise the dangers of
- 1p **38** Naar welke situatie verwijst de *New Scientist* met: “before we are sharing them on the wind” (laatste zin)?
Vul de volgende zin aan: Naar een situatie waarin...
- In de tekst staat in een van de alinea's 1 tot en met 5 een sarcastische opmerking.
- 1p **39** Citeer de eerste twee woorden van deze opmerking.
- “We need to make sure poor countries won't lose out in a flu pandemic” (onderkop)
- 1p **40** Ziet de *New Scientist* een mogelijke oplossing voor dit probleem? Zo nee, antwoord “Nee”. Zo ja, in welke alinea wordt deze oplossing genoemd?