International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities

Summit and Plenary Meeting Report

1-2 December 2021, 12:00 – 15:00 CET

Summit report

Emer Cooke and Antonio Barra Torres welcomed participants to the first ICMRA Summit since October 2019 in Rome, reminding participants that the purpose of the Summit is to take stock of some of the wider issues that impact the work of medicines regulators and public health bodies.

Session 1: COVID-19 Therapeutics and Vaccines: Lessons Learned on Drug Product Lifecycle Management during COVID-19 pandemic (Moderated by Yasuhiro Fujiwara)

- The Session began with a review of ICMRA initiatives to foster regulatory consensus and alignment to the COVID-19 response, highlighting vaccine workshops, information and best practice exchange in working groups, stakeholder engagement and proactive communication on topics such as novel trial designs and clinical data transparency.
- The panel, which included representatives from ANVISA (Brazil), NMPA (China), EMA (EU) and FDA (USA), spoke about the COVID-19 response, with a focus on two main questions: What are the urgent issues regarding COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines? How can ICMRA work together on them? and what can we do in preparation for the next pandemic or public health emergency building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic?
- The common themes from the interventions were the importance of continuous and real-time exchange of information between international regulators; transparency, communication and engagement with stakeholders; the importance of common data; and active collaboration and alignment to promote regulatory reliance and avoid patchwork of regulatory approaches.
- A discussion will follow during the Plenary meeting on how ICMRA can approach the response to the Omicron variant. Working together on this will increase the robustness of the response, which in turn helps support credible public health decisions and vaccine confidence.

Session 2: Experiences in the COVID-19 pandemic - an international organization overview (Moderated by Manuel R. Limeres)

- This session focused on how some of the key regional and international organizations are addressing challenges in increasing manufacturing capacity, ensuring equitable access to vaccines and therapeutics world-wide, establishing clinical trial platforms and reinforcing pharmacovigilance.
- WHO emphasised the importance of international regulatory cooperation, preparedness and reliance in supporting the work of COVAX allocation and donations. Work done particularly through ICMRA meant that regulatory issues have not been the rate-limiting factor in achieving equitable access to vaccines and therapeutics during the pandemic.

- The work of the APEC Regulatory Harmonization Steering Committee was presented as an example of how regional frameworks can help support strategic, effective and sustainable approaches to regulatory convergence.
- While the pandemic has shown flaws in the global health system, it was acknowledged that regulators were not the bottleneck for access, but more related to supply chain challenges and manufacturing capacity.
- The Special Session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) took place the day before the ICMRA Summit. The draft WHO Pandemic Treaty was presented at the WHA and there is a possible opportunity for ICMRA to provide input on regulatory cooperation issues in future discussions.

Parallel Session 3: Ensuring manufacturing capacity and rapid streamlined regulatory action (Moderated by Sau Lee)

- Emphasis from regulators on Post-Approval Change Management Protocols (PACMPs) which allow for agreement upfront with the company on data to be submitted and studies to be carried out.
- Need for further regulatory reliance and harmonisation of requirements between authorities.
- In addition to regular and early dialogue, a key enabler for any regulatory flexibilities is the importance of applicants having good product knowledge, and GMP readiness of the manufacturing site(s).
- It was concluded that regulatory actions have more impact when carried out in a joint and coordinated way by health authorities, and the sharing of information can bring answers to the challenges faced by the industry in relation to production capacity.

Parallel Session 3: Medicines for use during pregnancy and lactation (P&L) (Moderated by Janet Nooney)

- The session highlighted the unmet needs of P&L individuals, and that avoiding treatment is not the preferred option.
- More evidence needs to be generated in order to be able to establish benefit-risk analysis for use in these populations.
- COVID-19 highlighted the importance of inclusion of P&L individuals in pre- and post-approval clinical trials for vaccines and therapeutics. But the momentum needs to be used to expand this to other products/diseases. Examples of COVID-19, post-partum depression and regional experiences were shared.
- It was concluded that global collaborative effort is needed to promote and analyse data on consistent clinical trials with therapeutics for use in P&L.

Conclusions

- Despite unprecedented collaboration and exchange of information during the pandemic, more needs to be done, better and faster.
- The importance of proactive communication and transparency was emphasized by all participants. Regulatory authorities have a key role in informing the population.
- Regulatory cooperation and convergence is critical, as is analysing regulatory flexibilities and agilities that are sustainable for regulators and bring public health benefit. It is important to

be better prepared for the next public health emergency, which could include novel trial designs and supporting standard protocols to speed the regulatory response

- Regulatory convergence has been an important element in the global response, but unequal global vaccine coverage was highlighted as the heart of the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- ICMRA has a critical role to play in promoting increased collaboration and cooperation, as well as preparing for future pandemic preparedness.

Plenary meeting report

1) ICMRA governance issues *(Members only)*

a) Adoption of Terms of Reference (ToR) postponed due to scheduling of discussion on Omicron

Action: Adoption to be postponed to the next Plenary meeting.

b) Associate Member applications

The Plenary welcomed the State Expert Center of the Ministry of Health, Ukraine and from the Food and Drug Administration, Ghana as new Associate Members.

Pending expressions of interest and applications from the Jordan Food and Drug Administration, Food and Drug Administration of The Philippines, Icelandic Medicines Agency and Egyptian Drug Authority were noted.

Action: Update ICMRA website membership list (Secretariat)

2) Welcome

Welcoming current and new members, Emer Cooke spoke about the uniqueness of ICMRA as a platform for strategic leadership. ICMRA has proven its value over the last 12 months during the COVID-19 response, but without forgetting the importance of collaboration and achievements in other areas as well.

As shown in the updates from the various working groups, most actions and activities agreed during the April Plenary have been achieved thanks to the impressive work and commitment of all those involved.

3) NEW: Discussion on Omicron variant

This Plenary offered an opportunity to agree on a common response and show leadership in face of this new variant of concern.

WHO expressed concern about recent developments and pointed out that at the moment they are in a preparedness mode rather than at a reaction stage. It seems the new Omicron variant is taking over the Delta variant, possibly showing higher transmissibility, although it is too early to say. WHO stressed that travel bans do not offer a solution but rather can increase difficulties to move samples from one country to another.

It was agreed and concluded that more data are needed, in particular cross-neutralization data showing if the variant is able to escape the current vaccines. The conclusions of the ICMRA SARS-CoV-2 variants workshop in June may also need to be adjusted in light of Omicron, considering that the booster doses were not yet approved at the time. Next steps are to collect and share evidence and start a discussion among regulators using ICMRA as a platform to come out with a single voice about dealing with the new variant.

Action: Convene an ICMRA workshop on regulatory response for Omicron variant in mid-January once more data are available (Secretariat)

4) Projects updates and next steps

a) COVID-19 Working Group

The leads and members of the COVID-19 Working Group were thanked for driving delivery of workstreams and projects identified by the Executive Committee and Policy Teleconference.

Action: ICMRA crisis management group to update the ICMRA framework for the involvement of health regulatory authorities in the management of global health crises to take into account lessons learned in the COVID-19 experience (ANVISA, MHRA)

b) Digital transformation of GCP and GMP inspections and clinical trials

The reflection paper on the regulatory experience of remote approaches to GCP and GMP regulatory oversight during the COVID-19 pandemic has been finalized and is ready for publication.

Action: Publication of the Reflection paper on digital transformation of GCP and GMP inspections and clinical trials (Secretariat, PMDA)

c) Regulatory agilities, flexibilities and sustainability

In addition to completing the Summary report on regulatory flexibilities and agilities, the sub-group finalized a Deep Dive report on emergency use authorisations.

The group on Regulatory Agilities, Flexibilities and Sustainably (RAFS), which was to have looked at specific flexibilities introduced as part of the COVID-19 response that might be sustainably retained after the end of the pandemic, has been put on hold given existing workload and limited resources.

d) Pregnancy and lactation in COVID-19 clinical trials

The work of this group will contribute to change the paradigm and ensure that P&L individuals are included in clinical trials and their safety is better monitored. The reflection on strategic options to promote active inclusion of pregnant and lactating women in pre-approval clinical trials will be led by EMA, FDA and MHRA. Other members are invited to join the group.

Action: Draft ToR and issue call for interest among ICMRA members to join the group (EMA)

ICMRA joint statement/call to action (EMA, FDA, MHRA and other members)

e) Observational studies and Real-World Evidence

The Working Group was mandated to continue work on the three technical workstreams, with a reminder of the value of observational studies and real-world evidence: a proof of concept study on steroid use in COVID-19 patients, study on coagulopathy resulting from COVID-19, and a study on the reliability of COVID-19 case definitions in administrative and clinical databases.

Action: Research in each topic is underway with results and publications expected in coming months

Plan for meta-analyses between jurisdictions in 2022 (all members)

f) Antimicrobial Resistance

AMR is the silent pandemic and its consequences are substantial now and could be catastrophic in the future. It was noted that there was also a lot of unnecessary and inappropriate use of antibiotics for COVID-19. The ICMRA joint statement on AMR called for a coordinated One Health response, including public health, veterinary and environmental.

Infocards have been developed for use by ICMRA members to support public awareness campaigns during World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021. In parallel the Working Group has identified six potential topics for case studies on access, stewardship and innovation that could be used as part of the 2022 campaign.

Action: Selection and development of case studies for the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2022 (Health Canada)

g) Communications

Coordinated communication campaigns, cross-channel promotion of ICMRA materials and regular information sharing on the outcomes of member's discussions on regulatory issues and challenges have increased ICMRA's global awareness. Website visitor statistics, as well as analysis of media coverage, show an increased awareness of ICMRA globally. The communication focus until the end of 2022 will be on reviewing the ICMRA external engagement plan 2020-2022, following-up on activities that were put on hold due to the pandemic and focusing on sharing ICMRA COVID-19 lessons learnt and conclusions. The website security protocol has been upgraded from http to https, and a site design update is under evaluation. PMDA were thanked for hosting and managing the ICMRA website.

Action: Short news statement after the Summit and publication of the Summit report (EMA)

h) Innovation Network

The Horizon Scanning assessment report on artificial intelligence was published on 6 August and it has been the most consulted non-COVID-19 document on the ICMRA website. It was confirmed the assessment report on genome editing will be finished earlier. The other work items for this group include looking at issues relating to the microbiome, which have been put on hold due to prioritisation for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action: Innovation Network to discuss options for next steps.

i) Vaccine Pharmacovigilance Network

Following the change in the group's mandate to focus on COVID-19 vaccines, the Vaccine Pharmacovigilance Network has actively worked on sharing information on emerging safety signals and adverse events of special interest and following-up on the simulation exercise on fatal-case safety communication. The group has also worked on statements promoting vaccine confidence.

Action: Finalise revision of the ICMRA vaccine confidence statement, to be published in 2022 (MHRA)

j) **Pharmaceutical quality knowledge management system (PQKMS)**

The PQKMS group aims at developing a strategic direction for strengthening international collaboration to support global development manufacture and supply of medicines, including further reliance and collaboration in the field of inspections, convergence in the area of post-approval manufacturing change evaluations and strengthening resilience in global supply chains.

The group is updating the ToR. A workshop was held in July 2021 with IFPMA representatives on the topic of manufacturing capacity for production of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics.

Action: Two pilots have been developed: one on collaborative assessment between regions for post-approval change management protocols striving to achieve common outcomes, and the other one on hybrid inspections, where one region is physically performing the inspection on site and one or more other participating remotely.

Identify further strategic opportunities to enable further reliance in the field of CMC in collaboration with ICH, PIC/S, IPRP and other partners.

k) Supply chain integrity

This group has now produced and published two sets of technical recommendations on inter-operability of track and trace (T&T) systems. The most recent recommendations were published in August 2021; together with the WHO T&T policy, this is the first attempt to harmonise requirements globally at a technical and policy level. Given the globalisation of modern supply-chains, harmonisation of technical requirements, with a view of interoperable systems in the future, is critical.

Action: Work on a second iteration of the 2021 recommendations is currently on hold due to resource constraints.

l) Public Health Emergency Clinical Trials Working Group

This is an important area that just started, where ICMRA can also make a difference in facilitating multi-national/multi-regional platform trials on vaccines and therapeutics in a public health emergency context, in order to facilitate their efficient approval, oversight and start-up. It was stressed that this group not duplicate work being undertaken in other forums.

Action: Finalize Terms of Reference and respond to interest from ICMRA members to join the WG (MHRA and EMA)

Develop a reflection paper to provide direction on clinical trial regulatory requirements for platform trials (MHRA, EMA and WG members)

5) Any other business

Expressions of interest to host the 2022 ICMRA Summit were invited by the end of January 2022, noting that the Saudi FDA had already expressed their interest to do so.

Members were encouraged to review their current participation in the ICMRA workstreams and send changes and nominations to the secretariat.

Action: Circulate call for interest to host the Summit in 2022 (Secretariat)

Nominate new members for working groups and send new associate members the list of ICMRA working groups (Secretariat)

6) Closing remarks

One of the themes that came out strongly from this meeting and discussions over the past months is the importance of communication and transparency. This will remain a strategic priority for ICMRA for the future. It was emphasized that ICMRA continues to be an inclusive and plural forum.
Another strong theme was about how members can use the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 response beyond the pandemic, with special attention to the most vulnerable groups like pregnant and lactating individuals making sure they are included in pre-approval clinical trials.

The Chair concluded the two-day event thanking ANVISA for their great support in hosting the 2021 Summit and the many colleagues in the regulatory authorities for their contributions to delivering on the work ICMRA is doing together to support and promote international convergence, and hoping that in 2022 we will be able to look past COVID-19, and ahead to other areas in which international cooperation can bring added value.

Participating authorities

Members

Authority	Executive representative
Australia: Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)	John Skerritt
Brazil: National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA)	Antônio Barra Torres
Canada: Health Products and Food Branch Health Canada (HPFB-HC)	Pierre Sabourin
China: National Medical Products Administration (NMPA)	Chen Shifei
European Union: European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)	Andrzej Ryś
European Union: European Medicines Agency (EMA)	Emer Cooke
France: National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products (ANSM)	Miguel Bley
Germany: Paul-Ehrlich-Institut (PEI)	Klaus Cichutek
India: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)	Rajesh Verma
Ireland: Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA)	Lorraine Nolan
Italy: Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA)	Enrico Costa
Japan: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA)	 Fumi Yamamoto Yasuhiro Fujiwara
Republic of Korea: Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS)	In-Sook Park
Mexico: Federal Commission for Protection against Health Risks (COFEPRIS)	Miriam Loera Rosales
The Netherlands: Medicines Evaluation Board (CBG-MEB)	Ton de Boer / Hugo Hurts
New Zealand: New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority (Medsafe)	Chris James
Nigeria: National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)	Mojisola Adeyeye

Singapore: Health Sciences Authority, Singapore (HSA)	MimiMimi Choong
South Africa: South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA)	Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela
Sweden: Swedish Medicines Products Agency (MPA)	Björn Eriksson
Switzerland: Swissmedic	Raimund Bruhin
UK: Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)	June Raine
US: Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	Peter Marks

Associate members

Authority	Executive representative
Argentina: National Administration of Drugs, Foods and Medical Devices (ANMAT)	Manuel Limeres
Austria: Austrian Medicines and Medical Devices Agency (AGES)	Christa Wirthumer-Hoche
Colombia: National Food and Drug Surveillance Institute (INVIMA)	Karen Girón Useche
Cuba: Center for State Control of Medicines, Equipment and Medical Devices (CECMED)	Olga Lidia Jacobo
Denmark: Danish Medicines Agency (DKMA)	LarsLars Bo Nielsen
Ghana Food and Drugs Administration (FDA)	Mimi Darko
Israel: Ministry of Health (MOH)	Ofra Axelrod
Poland: Office for Registration of Medicinal Products, Medical Devices and Biocidal Products (URPL)	Grzegorz Cessak
Russia: Federal Service for Surveillance in Healthcare (Roszdravnadzor)	Anastasia Nikitina
Saudi Arabia: Saudi Food & Drug Authority (SFDA)	HishamHisham Aljadhey
Ukraine: State Expert Centre of the Ministry of Health of the Ukraine State Department	Mykhailo Babenko

Observers

Organisation	Executive representative

World Health Organization (WHO)	Mariângela Simão Rogério Pinto de Sá Gaspar
PAHO	Jarbas Barbosa da Silva Júnior
APEC	Michelle Limoli