

Witty to Help WHO with COVID-19 Vaccine Development



Sir Andrew Witty, president of UnitedHealth Group and CEO of Optum and former GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) chief executive, has taken a leave of absence from his current job to join the World Health Organization (WHO) in the agency's efforts to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.

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The appointment is effective as of April 20. Witty is expected to return to his position by the end of the year, UnitedHealth said in a [statement](#).

Most of the estimates for the COVID-19 vaccine development and market rollout lie in the range of 12-18 months, although the first candidates could be cleared for emergency use much sooner, within the next 3-6 months.

According to the WHO latest Draft Landscape on COVID-19 Candidate Vaccines ([11 April 2020](#)), there are over 70 candidates in development, but the majority are still in early-stage development. Only three vaccines have reached the clinical testing stage, namely from CanSino Biological Inc./Beijing Institute of Biotechnology, Inovio Pharmaceuticals and Moderna/NIAID.

Among the projects that may soon enter the clinical trials stage are vaccine candidates from [Oxford University](#) in the UK and [Pfizer/BioNTech](#). In the meantime, [Sanofi](#) and [GSK](#) have announced a collaboration to develop a vaccine candidate, combining technology from both companies.

Witty's task at the WHO is to coordinate all these projects to ensure the availability of vaccines as soon as possible.

Sir Andrew Witty was a member of the UnitedHealth Group Board of Directors from August 2017 until March 2018, when he became CEO of Optum. He was named president of UnitedHealth Group in November 2019. Witty served as CEO and a director of GSK from 2008 until 2017, having joined the company in 1985.

Source: [UnitedHealth Group](#)

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