

The rich get safer? Developing countries likely last in line to get virus vaccine

Worldwide, about a dozen potential COVID-19 vaccines are in early stages of testing. While some could move into late-stage testing later this year if all goes well, it's unlikely any would be licensed before early next year at the earliest. Still, numerous rich countries have already ordered some of these experimental shots and expect delivery even before they are granted marketing approval.

Britain and the U.S. have spent millions of dollars on various vaccine candidates, including one being developed by Oxford University and manufactured by AstraZeneca. In return, both countries are expected to get priority treatment; the British government declared that if the vaccine proves effective, the first 30 million doses would be earmarked for Britons.

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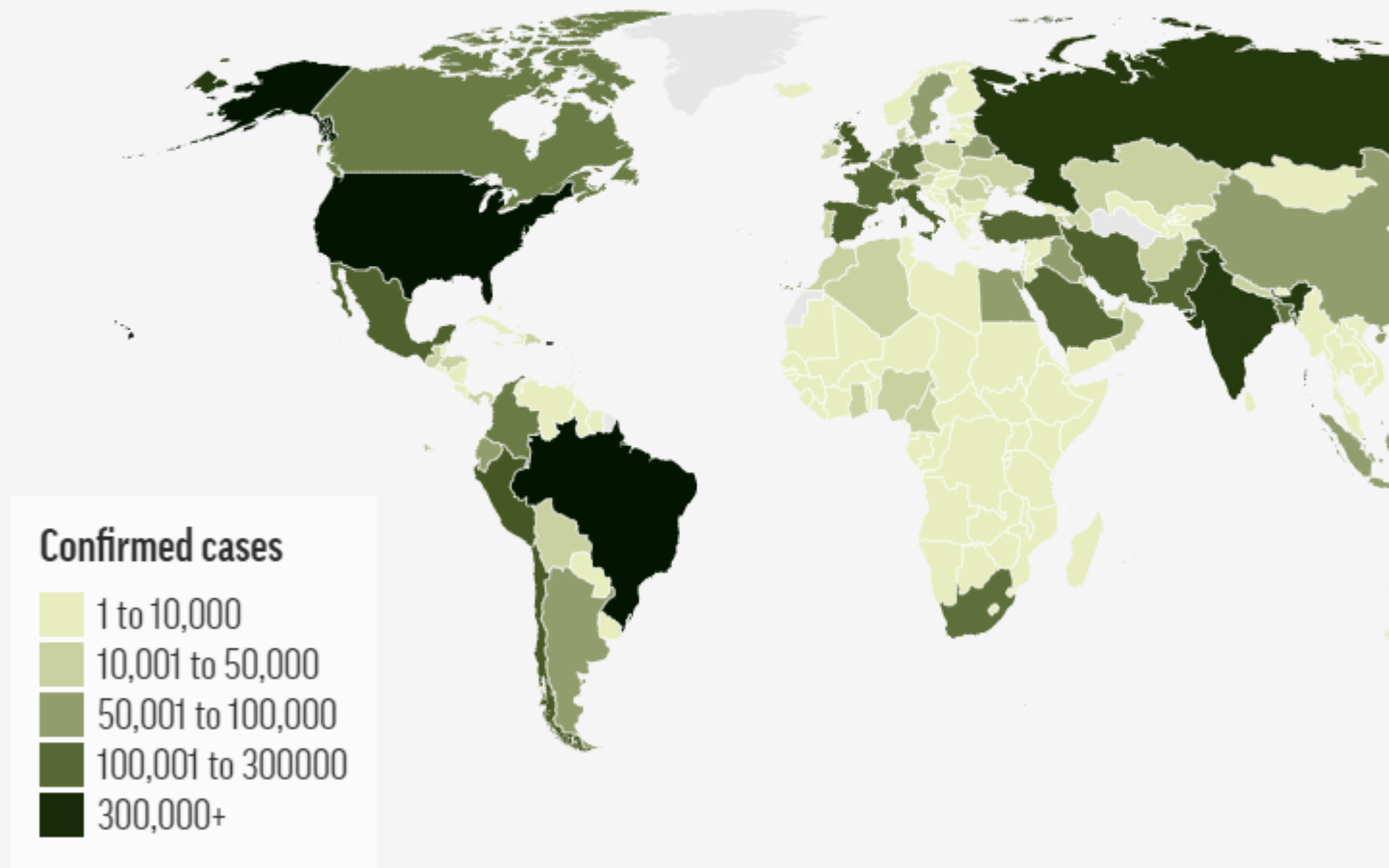
Health officials worry what that might mean for divvying up supplies of a vaccine arguably needed by every country on the planet.

"We can't just rely on goodwill to ensure access," said Arzoo Ahmed, of Britain's Nuffield Council on Bioethics, noting that precedents of how innovative drugs have been distributed are not encouraging. "With HIV/AIDS, it took 10 years for the drugs to reach people in lower-income countries."

African nations have already been at the back of the line for medical supplies in the pandemic and "it will be worse if a vaccine is found," UNAIDS chief Winnie Byanyima told reporters [June 18]. "We can't afford to be in the back of the queue."

The coronavirus spread around the world

Confirmed global cases, deaths and recoveries from COVID-19



Credit: Esri/Johns Hopkins/Phil Holm/Nicky Forster

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