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How ^{Email} Ecolab ^{Call} Supports The COVID-19 Vaccine Race from Invention to Injection

December 10, 2020



Less than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmaceutical companies are beginning to roll out the first vaccines. Ecolab has provided vital support at every stage of the process.

Since the emergence of COVID-19 nearly a year ago, pharmaceutical companies around the world have worked at unprecedented speeds to deliver an effective vaccine. The development of vaccines is a painstakingly complex process and the manufacturing scale—sufficient doses to protect all 7.5 billion people on Earth—is tremendous.

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Prior vaccines took years, sometimes decades to develop. This time around, to stop the pandemic, save countless lives and revive the world economy, it had to happen in a fraction of that time. It's the pharmaceutical equivalent of the Apollo project, but the vaccine makers didn't have ten years for their moonshot.

Even now, on the cusp of the global roll out, it's a gargantuan effort that takes global cooperation on an unseen scale. Ecolab has been involved in all stages to ensure the vaccines are developed and produced in clean, safe environments.

A dependable partner

Ecolab works with several companies involved in COVID-19 vaccine development. When the virus first started to spread, these companies drew up extremely ambitious plans to compress the development timeline. Since any supply chain hiccup would cause delays, dependable partners were essential.

With its decades of experience and problem-solving capabilities, Ecolab is helping keep pharmaceutical companies' vaccine efforts on track. As manufacturers mobilize their cross-border supply chains and facilities around the world, there's no time to try unproven protocols. Ecolab's global footprint is helping to standardize processes, enable production surges at existing facilities and fast-track setup at new ones.

The details matter. In one instance, a major vaccine maker had to call on Ecolab for assistance when another supplier couldn't deliver enough high-quality surface disinfectant wipes needed to disinfect workspaces, threatening to hamstring development work.

"Our solutions are process critical," said Nadeem Ahmed, corporate accounts manager, Life Sciences, who has been involved in supporting pharmaceutical companies in the vaccine race. "If Ecolab doesn't support these companies, they can basically come to a stop. If you're the trusted partner with the validated products for their process, there's no way they're going to change that process now. We are the piece that keeps it moving."

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Nadeem Ahmed

Corporate Accounts Manager, Life Sciences

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Creating a vaccine combines years and sometimes decades of painstaking research and testing, as well as rigorously controlled workspaces. Quality assurance is crucial, beginning from the earliest research phase.

The environments in which vaccines are developed are highly controlled, requiring precise conditions. From hand hygiene products to comprehensive cleaning and disinfecting programs and end-to-end cleanroom solutions, Ecolab ensures consistent results. This mitigates risk of contamination that could lead to false results or costly delays.

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Ensuring consistency in manufacturing

The same rigorously controlled environments are needed for the manufacturing process. Ecolab's solutions are expansive, such as its Bioquell technology that uses hydrogen peroxide vapor to decontaminate work spaces and personal protective equipment, disinfectants used to clean surfaces and essential equipment, and the clean-in-place solutions that allow manufacturers to effectively clean pipes and vessels in minimum time between production runs.

"We have validated processes in place to support the manufacturing side," said Lee Josey, assistant vice president of corporate accounts, Life Sciences. "That means we can prove that things are clean and help the company produce highly consistent, verifiable results."

With production set to ramp up to hundreds of millions of doses per month very soon, that consistency is crucial. Ecolab's validated products and protocols have proven their value and are ready to be scaled up right now.

Temperature control

Vaccine manufacturing, storage and distribution require strict temperature controls. The ultracold temperatures required for some of the vaccines that are set to be rolled out make facility temperature management crucial. Incorrect temperatures for a single production batch could compromise millions of vaccine doses.

That means plant temperature control systems must work correctly, which depends on sound water management. This can be achieved with Ecolab's 3D TRASAR™ Technology, with its digitally networked sensors that enable real-time precision monitoring and adjustment of water systems.

"Quality control is absolutely key," said Mark Tucker, corporate account manager for pharmaceutical sector customers in Europa for Ecolab's Nalco Water division. "We provide our customers with technological solutions to minimize the risk of corrosion, scaling, microbiological fouling and other problems in their water systems, which helps ensure that vaccine production lines have efficient cooling, heating and chilling."

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Distribution and delivery

Ecolab’s hand hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting products and associated programs are in use at hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout the world. Products like wipes, disinfectant cleaners and hand sanitizers have been in high demand, and Ecolab has stepped up efforts to meet global needs that are higher than ever.

When the COVID-19 vaccines become widely available, they will likely be first administered primarily at hospitals and clinics. With many thousands of people coming through, these facilities will have to continue to keep patients and staff as safe as possible. That will mean masks and physical distancing, but it will also require rigorous cleaning and sanitizing.

When it is your turn to get immunized and you see the Ecolab logo throughout your local hospital or healthcare facility, remember that the vaccine you are about to receive is the result of an unparalleled scientific and logistical effort – and Ecolab has been there to support it every step of the way.

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Ecolab is a global sustainability leader offering water, hygiene and infection prevention solutions and services that protect people and the resources vital to life. Building on a century of innovation, we deliver comprehensive science-based solutions, data-driven insights and world-class service to advance food safety, maintain clean and safe environments, optimize water and energy use, and improve operational efficiencies for customers around the world.

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