


# Coronavirus gave rise to a wave of solidarity

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**The coronavirus pandemic has affected the whole society. Great concerns about our health forced us to change our established way of life. We have moved from offices to work from home, and in an effort to protect vulnerable groups, we limited social life and personal contacts.**

However, the pandemic also brought one significant positive impact - solidarity. In an effort to help the society defeat the dangerous virus, many scientists have joined forces and worked together to develop vaccines, diagnostic tests and drugs.

The global pharmaceutical company Novartis quickly mobilized its experts in research, medicine and clinical trials, and offered its help in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. In cooperation with external consortia of several stakeholders and academic institutions, Novartis collaborates on the development of new drugs against COVID-19.

Not only did the company make a commitment to donate several million doses of a potential drug against COVID-19, but through the generics and biosimilars division of Sandoz, the company decided to maintain the prices of essential drugs that can help treat the disease. Novartis also pledged to provide targeted and tangible assistance to local communities in various regions of the world affected by the crisis, contributing over \$ 40 million to over 60 projects.

The company provided help abroad, as well as in Slovakia. One of the most supported projects was the humanitarian aid project of the Slovak Red Cross - Bratislava municipality, which had a clear goal - to support the delivery of cooked food to high-risk groups, i.e. the elderly, people with severe disabilities, people in need or in quarantine, unable to leave their homes. Novartis provided a financial grant of € 240,000 for this purpose.

For three months, from mid-May to mid-August, the SRC provided meals for selected groups of seniors and severely disabled people who chose to use the service, directly to their houses. Meals prepared according to epidemiological requirements, safely packaged in disposable wrapping, were distributed by volunteers to residents. The Slovak Red Cross - Bratislava municipality, together with many volunteers, was able to prepare and deliver freshly cooked food to a thousand people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic every day. This gesture was met with gratitude. People appreciated the attention and care in time of need, regarding the project with a significantly positive public response.



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However, the grant for the delivery of cooked food to directly endangered groups of people was not the last helping move from Novartis. The company has supported several patient organizations in their educational activities, and realized that the pandemic could jeopardize their very functioning. During this period, patient organizations had to cancel many of their planned events. Therefore, they lost a portion

of financial resources needed for continuing their activities. However, their functioning is very important. Besides bringing together people with the same diagnosis, they also run awareness campaigns, and they provide psychological, health and socio-legal counseling. Therefore, Novartis decided to lend its financial support in this direction and provide funding for projects aimed at combating the impacts of the coronavirus crisis.

Thanks to this financial contribution, the League against Rheumatism in Slovakia will be able to record a series of five videos about special yoga therapy for rheumatism patients with the expert Silvia Bobocka. They will be created with the aim to help patients with depression, inducing relaxation and relieving stress, stemming from stressful situations associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Another league project which received financial support is also focused on this problem. As the risk of depression increases with rheumatic diseases, their project aims to reinforce the mental health of patients. Thanks to the obtained financial contribution in June, they organized a webinar with a psychologist. During the webinar, patients learned how to discover their inner strength and to boost their mental immunity.

The company also supported the CML Life, an Association of Patients with Chronic Myelocytic Leukemia, which, thanks to Novartis support, will result in creation of a new website for patients and their families. In addition to information about this oncologic disease, it will contain a specialized section dedicated to the latest information about

COVID-19, as well as modules for education and regular online access of patients to their doctors - oncologists.

Thanks to the contribution of Novartis, the Union of the Blind and Visually Impaired of Slovakia will be able to purchase new computers and technologies for three social rehabilitation instructors. This will allow them to work with clients remotely and improve the provision of social counseling.

Knowing that COVID-19 can have a severe, and even fatal progression not only for seniors but also for patients with chronic diseases, the company contributed to the production of information materials for selected groups of patients through its project We Care. In its first stage, experts prepared recommendations for cardiac patients, who are at the greatest risk. Subsequently, the same was done for patients with chronic lung disease, rheumatic patients or patients with age-related macular degeneration disease. Information materials with specific recommendations were prepared by top Slovak doctors, who shared their knowledge about the disease and its effect in a given diagnosis, all in a simple and comprehensible way.

They advised patients about things they should be aware of during the coronavirus pandemic, how to proceed in case of health problems, or in cases when they need to see a doctor. Information materials about how to behave during the coronavirus pandemic for selected groups of patients are available on the websites of the patient organizations.

The pandemic has brought many limitations into our lives, but at the same time, it has showed us the good in each of us. We have learned to respect others a little more, to unite for a good cause and to help others. Perhaps this knowledge will remain with us even when the pandemic is over.