

## Should you use Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine as palliation for the treatment of COVID19?

Written by Dr. Harold Gunatillake -health writer

Both chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are drugs that doctors in Sri Lanka have been prescribing for malaria for over 70 years and was most efficacious and specific for killing malarial parasite. Doctors also prescribed the same drugs nonspecifically for traveler's diarrhea, amoebiasis, and autoimmune conditions.



Malaria is caused by mosquito bites in countries like Sri Lanka where it was prevalent in the past. The malarial parasite carried by these mosquitoes, enter the body through punctures and lives in tissues such as red blood cells or the liver.

This controversial anti-malarial drug is given to Australians, suffering from Covid-19 without carrying out any clinical trials.

It is the opinion of most doctors due to serious threatening side effects of the drug, against using it for conditions for which it has not been tested.

Further, at a time when the immune system is at its lower ebbs due to viral infection, giving drugs like chloroquine may exacerbate the side effects.

Focus on this drug for Covid19 came from a French study. Their findings were that 57.1% tested negative for the virus after a trial treated with hydroxychloroquine. The drug was combined with an antibiotic azithromycin on the trial.

**It is a known fact that antibiotics cannot kill viruses because bacteria and viruses have different mechanisms and machinery to survive and replicate. So, there is no rationale for conducting such trials.**

As far as treating corona virus with chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine is very much controversial.

Knowing their side effects, including, ringing in the ears, damage to the retina, deafness, increased liver enzymes, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea, skin rashes, reduced blood cells (neutropenia) among others, one should be cautious in entering the trial, or taking the drug on your own.

Furthermore, common drugs that are being used by patients for other situations may interact with chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine.

The American scientists are also desperate to find out whether these drugs may help the health care workers as prophylactic measure to do clinical trials to check on the effectiveness of the drugs.

The virus that cause COVID-19 uses a backdoor to enter the cell. As it enters, it is exposed to an acidic, vinegar-like environment, which needed for the virus to get all the way inside.

Hydroxychloroquine metaphorically keeps the cap on the vinegar, Warner Greene (senior virologist with the Gladstone Institute, San Francisco) says, preventing acidification. Thus, there is a scientific rationale for how this drug might exert an antiviral effect, he says. But there are warnings about these two drugs too.

## Vaccine for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)

There are two types of vaccines that are available to prevent and mitigate the symptoms of the viral infection.

On Jan.28, the US Department of Health and Human Services announced that the National Institute of Health has begun to collaborate on the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. Unfortunately, it will take another year or longer before a safe, proven vaccine can be released to the public, according to HHS officials.

## Convalescent plasma and hyperimmune globulin for passive immunity

US Food and Drug Administration officials have announced that they have approved plans for nationwide trials of giving plasma from recovered patients from the disease. Convalescent plasma and hyperimmune globulin are both derived from the blood of people who have recovered from the disease, and sterile purified plasma given to the more serious victims having lung problems requiring ventilators, may alleviate the progress of the disease, hopefully.

This approach gives passive immunity through the antibodies of the donors. Until a proved vaccine is available, in addition to giving convalescent plasma and hyperimmune globulin as therapy, prophylactic home disciplines and supportive care must continue to control and diminish the spread.

Washing your hands with liquid soap under running water for at least 20 seconds, rinsing well and drying your hands thoroughly with paper towels frequently, and adhering to the social distance of six feet, are the only methods available until the vaccine is ready for inoculation.

Covering your mouth anytime you cough or sneeze and throwing away used tissues is as important as washing your hands as frequent as possible.

Staying within your home as much as possible and leaving for essential requirements infrequently, such as going to the supermarket or your chemist, should be strictly adhered to.

As I have mentioned in other articles on the subject, the Asian diet seem to give some immunity boost, including curries with plenty of coconut, eating 'pol sambol' frequently, rasam and other soups with coriander, turmeric, chilies, garlic , tamarind, ginger, chicken soup, among others.

### No specific treatment for COVID-19

There is no specific treatment for any viral infections other than the supportive care.

These treatments and home remedies essentially treat symptoms, which often in the case of COVID-19 involve fever, cough and shortness of breath.

In mild cases, this might simply mean rest and fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen for comfort. Aspirin may be contraindicated, especially for those who suffer from asthma.

In the hospitals, you are given an anti-viral drug called oseltamivir, or Tamiflu, which seems to suppress the virus' reproduction in at least some cases. The

National Institutes of Health has begun a clinical trial at the University of Nebraska Medical Centre to test the antiviral remdesivir for COVID-19,

An oral drug called EIDD-2801 has shown promise in test-tube experiments with human lung and airway cells, scientists reported online April 6 in the journal Science Translational Medicine. The drug might even be more efficient at blocking the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, than remdesivir, a drug being tested against COVID-19 in clinical trials that began in March. While remdesivir stops the novel coronavirus from replicating entirely, EIDD-2801 introduces genetic mutations into the virus's RNA. As the RNA makes its copies, so many damaging mutations accumulate that the virus is no longer able to infect cells, Scientific American reported. The drug also seems to work against several RNA viruses, and as such, the researchers said it could be a multipurpose antiviral. (Ref: Live Science Staff)

The viruses within the body have a lifespan and will remain in the body for a while, and temporizing measures keep you comfortable.

## Warmer weather to curb COVID-19

Unlike the cold virus, which is more a seasonal winter disease, COVID-19 transmission does not seem to change with fluctuations in daily temperature or humidity. This is the general opinion, but we believe the spread is restrictive in tropical countries, and the strong sun and humid climate may be favoring that situation.

Hope this article was useful.

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