



Therapeutics Today

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Updates on COVID-19 and medicines

In the coming weeks, the NMIC will continue to highlight any medicines-related updates and/or useful resources, either via Twitter @NationalNmic or by signposting in our extra editions of Therapeutics Today.

- A HSE repository for COVID-19 clinical guidance and evidence hosted by the HSE library was launched earlier this week (www.hselibrary.ie). It contains a section dedicated to pharmacy/medicines management including alerts on the following topics:
 - Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin combination therapy for COVID-19
 - Clinical evidence for the use of antivirals in the treatment of COVID-19
 - Specific antiviral therapy in clinical management of acute respiratory infection with COVID-19.
- The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has also issued a preliminary update on treatments and vaccines against COVID-19. The Agency has stated that **at this point no medicine has yet demonstrated efficacy in treating COVID-19**; details are available at <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/update-treatments-vaccines-against-covid-19-under-development>. The EMA has also stated that chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are only to be used in clinical trials or emergency use programmes; the full statement is available at <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/covid-19-chloroquine-hydroxychloroquine-only-be-used-clinical-trials-emergency-use-programmes>.
- The HSE Medicines Management Programme has written to prescribers and pharmacists about ensuring the availability of hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil®) for those already on established regimens for rheumatoid and lupus conditions. The letter is available at https://www.thepsi.ie/Libraries/COVID/HSE_letter_for_prescribers_and_pharmacists-Ensuring_availability_of_hydroxychloroquine_Plaquenil.sflb.ashx.
- As some of the potential treatments for COVID-19 are associated with QT prolongation and torsades de pointes, the US specialist QT website, Credible Meds has provided useful information available at <https://www.crediblemeds.org/blog/recommendations-re-covid-19-treatments/>.

Contraception and COVID-19

- The UK Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare has issued clinical statements on Contraception and COVID-19, which include information on extended use of the etonogestrel implant and the 52mg levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system during COVID-19 restrictions. These clinical statements are available at <https://www.fsrh.org/fsrh-and-covid-19-resources-and-information-for-srh/>.

Treatment of dry hands associated with frequent handwashing due to COVID-19

- The British Association of Dermatologists has issued a statement on dry skin and frequent handwashing to reduce COVID-19 risk. The hand management tips on minimising the impact of frequent handwashing on the skin are available at <https://www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/statement-on-coronavirus-and-skin-disease-affecting-the-hands/>.

Recommendations from various professional bodies on COVID-19 and medicines

- The Irish College of General Practitioners (www.icgp.ie) has a useful COVID-19 Therapeutics page on the Clinical Hub section of their website; this includes a recent update on respiratory illness.
- The British Thoracic Society (BTS) has also published information, guidance and resources to support the respiratory community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations for patients with e.g. asthma, COPD, obstructive sleep apnoea etc. are included. Full details can be found at <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/about-us/covid-19-information-for-the-respiratory-community/>
- A list of links to guidance and advice about medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic from a variety of professional bodies has been created by the UK Specialist Pharmacy Service. It is available via <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/summary-of-covid-19-medicines-recommendations-from-professional-bodies/>

COVID-19 drug interactions website

- A summary of drug interactions with experimental COVID-19 therapies and many co-medication classes has been produced by the Liverpool Drug Interaction Group (based at the University of Liverpool) and is available online at www.covid19-druginteractions.org. Guidance on the administration of COVID-19 therapies to patients who cannot swallow is also provided.

Prescription regulations

- As we go to press, new prescription regulations signed by Simon Harris on 2nd April and due to be published on 3rd April, will extend prescription validity for stable patients and allow electronic transfer of prescriptions via the HSE's Healthmail. Please check www.psi.ie or www.gov.ie for official update.

Important editors' note: The content of the above websites is updated as new information becomes available - please check back regularly.