



COVID FACT SHEET No. 3

Covid 19 and Hydroxychloroquine

Some additional information for reflection

Since the start of the Covid-19 epidemic, some physicians recommend treating it with hydroxychloroquine (alone or combined with azithromycin).

Hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil©) is prescribed for certain chronic affections (rheumatoid arthritis or lupus for example). It is a derivative of chloroquine (Nivaquine©) which has been used a lot in combating malaria. For the treatment of Covid-19, much higher doses are recommended.

Azithromycin is a commonly-used antibiotic.

Late April, three observations can be made:

- It is hard to assess the treatment of an illness which the most often is cured spontaneously and whose serious forms affect a specific group (chronic disease patients or over 65 years old) and therefore only represent a fairly small proportion of the general population.
- In March, preliminary studies of the treatment of Covid-19 by Plaquenil© and azithromycin have aroused some hopes. More complete studies will be necessary to confirm them. These are under way, but the first results are not expected before mid-May. It is therefore still not certain that this dual therapy will be effective.
- Other studies show that hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, at the high recommended doses, increase the risk of serious heart effects (sometimes fatal).

As a conclusion, in late April 2020, it is not yet possible to say whether the benefit/risk balance is favourable for the hydroxychloroquine treatment (alone or combined).

Caution is therefore needed : be careful about self-medicating !

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