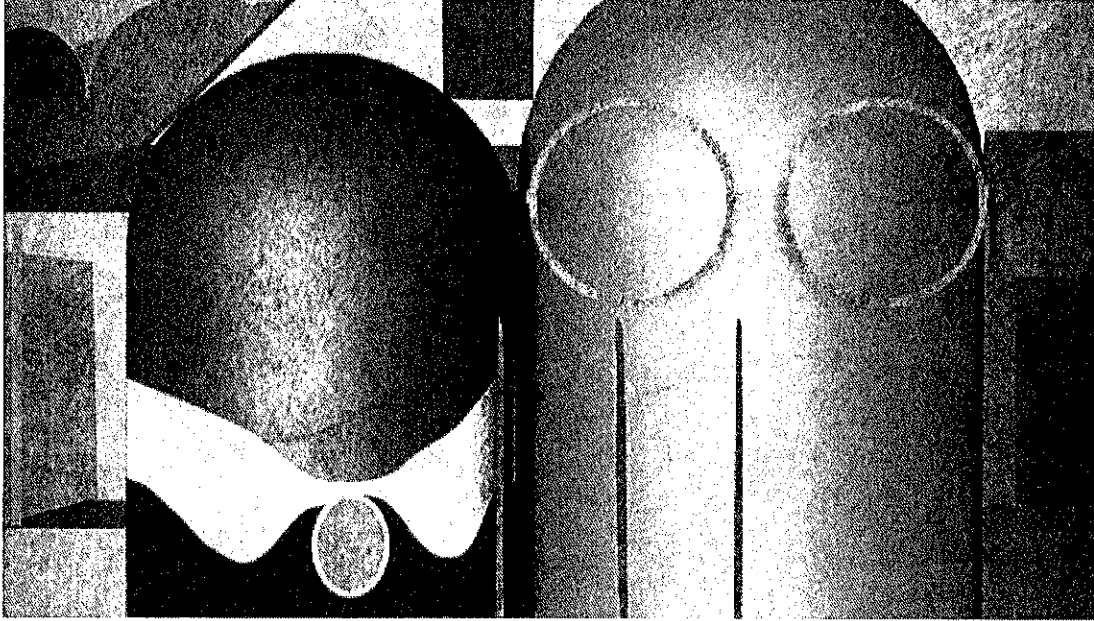


Pharmalittle: Hydroxychloroquine fails to help patients in a study; what will states do with the old malaria drug now?

By [Ed Silverman](#)² [@Pharmalot](#)³

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Alex Hogan/STAT

And so, another working week will soon draw to a close. Not a moment too soon, yes? This is, you may recall, our treasured signal to daydream about weekend plans. The agenda is rather modest, though, since we may spend part of the time dreaming about the day when we can resume close encounters of the previous kind. For now, we plan to hang with the short person, pretend that we are training the official mascot, and take a few naps. And what about you? This is a good time to check your supply of masks or, perhaps, plan your grocery shopping. You could binge-watch something on the telly or reach out, so to speak, to older folks who are cooped up. Well, whatever you do, chin up. Keep on the sunny side and stay safe. See you soon. ...

A study found that hydroxychloroquine, a decades-old malaria drug touted by President Trump, did not appear to help hospitalized patients with Covid-19, [CNBC](#)⁵ says. The observational study looked at 1,376 consecutive patients who arrived at the emergency room with symptoms of coronavirus. Nearly 60%, or 811 of the patients, received the drug within 48 hours and were found, on average, to be more severely ill than those not given the drug. The findings did not find any potential benefit or harm from the drug.

The Strategic National Stockpile has shipped 28 million tablets of hydroxychloroquine to states since April 1. States received millions more from donations or taxpayer-funded purchases, [Roll Call](#)⁶ notes. But after doubts arose about whether the drug is safe and effective for treating Covid-19, states are donating supplies to patients who need them to treat other illnesses, seeking refunds, or weighing what to do with them. For example, about 9,200 bottles of hydroxychloroquine, or 920,000 pills, remain sitting in the Texas stockpile.

A drug for rheumatoid arthritis appeared to help improve lung function in hospitalized Covid-19 patients, a positive sign for treating those with severe inflammation in their organs, [Bloomberg News](#)⁷ writes. An observational study of 29 patients found that treatment with Kineret, which is sold by Swedish Orphan Biovitrum, was associated with a 90% survival rate and reduced respiratory symptoms in severely ill patients. Those who were given Kineret had a 72% lower chance of exhibiting signs of a dangerous cytokine storm, compared with those not given the drug.

Sinovac Biotech, the drug maker behind one of China's most promising coronavirus vaccine candidates, is in talks to conduct late-stage trials globally as the race for an immunization against Covid-19 intensifies, [Bloomberg News](#)⁸ reports. The company is in discussion with regulators in other countries, and the World Health Organization, to launch Phase 3 clinical trials in regions where the novel coronavirus is still spreading rapidly.

GlaxoSmithKline ([GSK](#)⁹) will start trials of an experimental rheumatoid arthritis drug on patients suffering from pneumonia related to Covid-19 at the end of the month, [Reuters](#)¹⁰ informs us. Having screened its drugs for potential in the fight against the coronavirus, GSK found that otilimab could possibly ease the devastating effect of the virus on the lungs but not suppress it directly. For the study, about 800 patients will receive either otilimab or a placebo, according to [ClinicalTrials.gov](#).

In a surprise move, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan vetoed state funding for a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, which was created last year to establish maximum prices that the state and local governments will pay for "high-cost" medicines, [STAT](#)¹¹ says. The entity is designed to function like rate-setting boards that regulate what public utilities can charge residents, but Hogan argued it would be "unconscionable" to agree to the funding because it would be like raising taxes and fees on state residents at a time when many are out of work.

In the latest fallout from a federal probe into generic-drug price fixing, Apotex agreed to pay \$24 million to resolve criminal charges of conspiring with other manufacturers, becoming the fourth company to be charged as part of the long-running investigation, [STAT](#)¹² writes. The company, which is one of the world's largest generic companies, admitted to working with several rivals to set prices for pravastatin, a commonly prescribed cholesterol medication, between 2013 and 2015, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

CytoDyn ([CYDY](#)¹³) chief executive officer Nader Pourhassan is already under fire for the timing of lucrative sales of company stock. But on Thursday night, Pourhassan found himself with a new problem: an admission that CytoDyn misled investors about a completed drug marketing application to the Food and Drug Administration, [STAT](#)¹⁴ tells us. The biotech's lead drug, leronlimab, an investigational treatment for patients with HIV, has not been submitted for approval to the FDA, as the company previously claimed.

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