

# Melbourne doctors urge officials to consider hydroxychloroquine, ivermectin in fight against COVID-19

Senior doctors across Melbourne have formed an “alliance” and are urging health officials to consider the use of two drugs which they say can cure coronavirus.

[Anthony Piovesan](#)

@AnthonyPiovesan

3 min read

February 8, 2021 - 2:10PM

Moreland Leader



Senior doctors across Melbourne are calling on the nation’s COVID-19 task force to consider the use of the drugs hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin as a cure against coronavirus. Picture: George Frey/AFP

Senior doctors across Melbourne are calling on the nation’s COVID-19 task force to consider the use of the drugs hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin as a cure against coronavirus.

Some of the city’s top general practitioners, urologists, psychiatrists and surgeons in the group known as the COVID-19 Medical Network said the drugs could cure coronavirus when taken in its early stages.

GP Dr Mark Hobart said he prescribed ivermectin to a 94-year-old woman in a nursing home who “responded very well” last year.

“This drug works early on before the virus gets into the lungs,” he said.

“I’ve taken it myself when I was treating elderly patients at a nursing home last year and there were dozens of infections, I never got coronavirus.

“I’ve written numerous prescriptions for people who want to have it on hand — you’ve got nothing to lose with this drug, it’s very safe.

“We’re coming up to another cold and flu season and if it’s given to people in nursing homes before an outbreak it’ll cover them.”



Dr Mark Hobart says he has prescribed ivermectin against coronavirus. Monash University researchers in collaboration with the Doherty Institute found ivermectin stopped SARS-CoV-2 from growing over 48 hours. But it was yet to be tested in humans.

Australia’s COVID-19 task force recommended against the use of the widely-used anti-parasitic drug ivermectin as treatment outside of trials, and had no recommendation for its use in prevention.

Hydroxychloroquine is used in Australia to treat arthritis, with the task force also discouraging its use against COVID-19 unless the patient was enrolled in a clinical trial.

But anaesthetist Dr Eamonn Mathieson — who practises in Melbourne’s north — is urging the task force to reconsider.

“The evidence in favour of the efficacy and safety of the treatment options for the management of the early phase of COVID-19 illness are now considered by many Australian and international medical experts, including the esteemed professor Robert Clancy, to be virtually beyond dispute,” he said.

“It could be argued that this death toll may have been significantly reduced if early treatments options and protocols were made available and were not blocked or banned.”

Dr Mathieson cited studies from overseas and said countries that used hydroxychloroquine against coronavirus had “dramatically lower” death tolls than other countries who didn’t use the drug.

Coalition MP Craig Kelly put his political career on the line and spoke out about the two drugs and his attempts to lobby health officials to consider them as treatments against coronavirus.

But on Friday he said it would now be subject to freedom of information applications, and could no longer comment publicly.

“As a member of the government, I have a responsibility to make sure that groups that are government funded ... if they are making recommendations to the government, they are not missing crucial bits of the puzzle,” he said last week.

National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Task force executive director professor Julian Elliott said “based on currently available evidence” task force guidelines included a strong recommendation hydroxychloroquine should not be used for the treatment of COVID-19.

“There is very strong evidence from 11 randomised controlled trials that hydroxychloroquine is not effective for the treatment of COVID-19 and can be potentially harmful,” he said.

“There is limited high quality evidence evaluating the effectiveness of ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19.

“Given this, the Task force recommends that ivermectin only be used in the context of randomised trials with appropriate ethical approval, from which reliable evidence on its effectiveness or otherwise could be generated.

“A number of trials are currently underway and when their results are published, the Task force will incorporate these trials into the evidence review and update the recommendation as appropriate.”

Mr Elliott said the task force was in “frequent communication” with international expert guideline groups.

[anthony.piovesan@news.com.au](mailto:anthony.piovesan@news.com.au)