

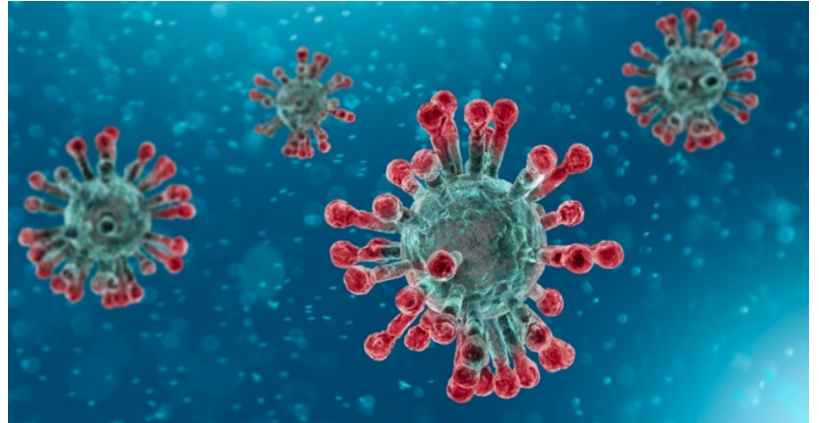


Written by [Steve Byas](#) on March 19, 2020

## Old Drug May Wipe Out Coronavirus

Hydroxychloroquine (sold under the brand name Plaquenil), which has been used to treat malaria, rheumatoid arthritis, and systemic lupus, has been killing coronavirus (COVID-19) in laboratory experiments, according to findings published March 9 in the *Clinical Infectious Diseases* journal.

The study's authors, from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, wrote in a letter published Wednesday in *Cell Discovery*, "We predict that the drug has a good potential to combat the disease."



In another study published on Wednesday, French researchers have completed a clinical trial, using the drug to treat confirmed cases of COVID-19. In a controlled study in France, 20 patients were given 600 mg of Plaquenil each day, and found that half of the treated group went from positive to negative for the virus by the third day. By the sixth day, that figure had increased to 70 percent.

The study said, "Despite its small sample size our survey shows that hydroxychloroquine treatment is significantly associated with the viral load reduction/disappearance in COVID-19 patients and its effect is reinforced by azithromycin."

Gregory Rigano, an advisor to the Stanford University School of Medicine, is leading a program testing the effects of hydroxychloroquine for treatment of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. He appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight* on Wednesday night, and claimed that hydroxychloroquine, combined with azithromycin, is a 100-percent cure for the virus. He pleaded with President Donald Trump to "authorize the use of hydroxychloroquine against coronavirus immediately."

President Trump is known to be a regular viewer of Carlson's show.

If this common drug — hydroxychloroquine — is the "miracle drug" that will treat COVID-19, it would not be the first common drug that could have stopped a pandemic. During the 14th century, the greatest outbreak of the bubonic plague wiped out perhaps half the population of Europe in seven years. Today, a common drug, tetracycline — often used to treat acne, malaria, syphilis, and brucellosis — could have greatly reduced the number of deaths, as it also kills the bacteria that caused the plague.

Today, most deaths in the United States come from accidents, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and the like. But as America entered the 20th century, more than one-third of all deaths were due to infectious diseases. Now, that figure is only about two percent. One reason that cancer deaths, heart attacks and strokes, and diabetes kill a much larger percentage of people today than they did in the 1800s is that people far more often died of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and smallpox *before* they died of something like a heart attack.

A major difference in a pandemic such as the Black Death of the 14th century and say, the Spanish Flu of the 20th century, is that the former was caused by a bacterial infection, while the latter was due to a viral infection. Antibiotics, such as tetracycline, can tame the Plague, but few viruses can be killed that easily.



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That is why the focus on treating viruses is more on prevention, with vaccines. When Englishman Edward Jenner developed a vaccine against smallpox in the late 1700s, the virus was killing between 10 and 20 percent of the English population. In America, entire American Indian tribes were sometimes wiped out by smallpox. When Jenner introduced his idea of vaccination, he was ridiculed and reviled by many. Even today, there are many who question the usefulness of vaccinations, despite its role in practically wiping out diseases such as polio. A vaccine against rabies was one of many achievements of the great scientist, Louis Pasteur.

Certainly, vaccines can be over-used. Many understandably question giving multiple vaccines to young children at one time. And we must be cautious about medical decisions being made by government edict — politicians and bureaucrats — rather than by physicians in consultation with their patients. When a soldier died in New Jersey in 1976 from the Swine Flu, a vaccine was rushed into the market, and wound up killing and disabling more Americans than the Swine Flu killed (only one, for sure). Johnny Carson, in his role as Karnak, even called it the cure for which there is no known disease. Albert Sabin, who developed the oral vaccine against polio, publicly questioned the rush to develop a vaccine against Swine Flu, citing concerns that the vaccine could be unsafe.

In short, what we need in situations like we are now facing is a balance between those who condemn all vaccinations and medical treatments (arguing, for example, we just need better hygiene), and those who believe the government should dictate medical decisions.

*Image: Naeblys via iStock / Getty Images Plus*

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