

March 27, 2020

To Island Health Physicians and Nurse Practitioners,

The Island Health Division of Infectious Diseases is unanimous in only supporting the use of unproven therapies for COVID-19 in the context of clinical trials. **We fully endorse the March 25th joint statement¹ from the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, Pharmacists, and Nursing Professionals of British Columbia, saying unproven therapies for COVID-19 should not be prescribed.**

Specifically, chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine have been purported as COVID-19 therapy and prophylaxis, and our division is aware of the prescription of hydroxychloroquine in the community for these purposes. At this time, hydroxychloroquine is an unproven therapy. As there is currently no evidence showing it improves patient outcomes, we feel it should not be used as therapy or prophylaxis of COVID-19. Further, using hydroxychloroquine now for these purposes will rapidly deplete its availability, which could harm patients currently taking it for rheumatologic conditions where evidence of its efficacy is robust.

The ID Division feels strongly that patients should be provided therapies of benefit or have access to investigational therapies in the context of clinical trials. The importance of this is outlined in a recent editorial in JAMA² that our division fully agrees with, including recently published guidelines from the BCCDC³. To that end, we are working to ensure equitable access to experimental therapeutics through clinical trials for all patients throughout Vancouver Island.

Our understanding of COVID-19 will rapidly change over the coming months and our division will continuously review the literature, but for now there are no proven therapies and **we respectfully ask our colleagues to join us in not prescribing unproven therapies for COVID-19.**

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric Partlow (Division Head)
Dr. David Forrest
Dr. Wayne Ghesquiere
Dr. Karsten Hammond
Dr. M. Siobhan Holland
Dr. Chester Morris
Dr. Alastair Teale
Dr. Divya Virmani

1. <https://www.cpsbc.ca/files/pdf/2020-03-25-Joint-Statement-on-Unproven-Therapies-for-COVID-19.pdf>

2. Kalil AC. Treating COVID-19—Off-Label Drug Use, Compassionate Use, and Randomized Clinical Trials During Pandemics. *JAMA*. Published online March 24, 2020. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.3204

3. http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Guidelines_Unproven_Therapies_COVID-19.pdf

