
US Sends Brazil Hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 Treatment

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The United States has sent to Brazil more than two million doses of hydroxychloroquine touted by President Donald Trump as potentially protecting against and treating the coronavirus, even though scientific evidence has not backed up those uses.

In a joint statement with the Brazilian government on Sunday, the White House said the doses of hydroxychloroquine had been sent as a prophylactic for front-line health workers and as a therapeutic for those who may come down with the virus.

The White House said it was also delivering 1,000 ventilators.

Brazil is Latin America's hardest-hit country and the second in the world with over 514,000 cases. Last week Trump announced that the U.S. was restricting travel from the country to prevent travelers from spreading the virus in the U.S.

On March 19, Trump started promoting the drug as a potential treatment based on a positive report about its use against the virus, but subsequent studies found that it was not helpful. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued a warning about its use.

The FDA said it was aware of increased use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine through outpatient prescriptions and that the malaria drugs could cause abnormal heart rhythms and dangerously rapid heart rate.

The agency also took note of the information from other research teams, such as the study presented in Marseille, France, which claimed that hydroxychloroquine and the antibiotic azithromycin had been successful in treated patients.

For them, studies like this lack veracity because they are too small or poorly designed to offer strong evidence of benefit, representing a high risk. Cases of poisoning have been reported in Nigeria and the U.S.

However, and according to White House physician Sean Conley, "after numerous discussions" both Trump and his doctor decided that the "potential benefit from treatment outweighed the relative risks," despite scientific evidence.
