

COVID-19 vaccine research

Can SA's decades-old vaccine regime work against Covid-19?

“A new study by scientists at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) could indicate a major score for SA in the fight against Covid-19,” reported *Times Select* (6 April 2020). The study suggests that countries with a longstanding and successful BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccination programme – which SA has had since 1973 - are faring far better against the virus. The vaccine (which is now about 100 years old) has been given to 4 000 healthcare workers in Australia to see if it will protect them. Similar research is going on in the Netherlands and may also be rolled out in Boston and other Australian cities, according to Bloomberg.

Nurofen: In April Nurofen producer Reckitt Benckiser said that it was not aware of any evidence that the pills' active ingredient *ibuprofen* adversely impacted patients suffering from COVID-19. This follows a warning by France's health minister that people should not use anti-inflammatory drugs such as *ibuprofen* if they have coronavirus-like symptoms.

Darunavir: In March Johnson & Johnson announced that it has no evidence its HIV drug, Prezista, had any effect on patients suffering from coronavirus, reported *Reuters Health*. There are no published studies that the drug, also known as darunavir, has been evaluated as a treatment for the coronavirus, J&J said.

Hydroxychloroquine: In April it was reported that the pharmaceutical company, Austell Laboratories, is importing half a million chloroquine phosphate tablets for use in severely ill COVID-19 patients, after receiving

There's been widespread interest in chloroquine as both a preventative measure and for treating patients with coronavirus. But, despite some early studies raising hopes, one subsequent larger scale trial has shown it's not effective as a treatment, reported *BBC News* (18 June 2020).

Meanwhile the World Health Organization (WHO) has halted its trials, saying that the drug doesn't reduce death rates in patients with coronavirus

TB Vaccine: In May *ENW* reported that trials were started at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town. Bacillus Calmette–Guerin (BCG) booster shots were administered to 250 health care workers, while another 250 received a dummy formula, or placebo. The vaccine is one of the world's oldest and most trusted immunisations.

Leading virologist warns that C-19 vaccine not likely soon

Professor Peter Piot, Director of the **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine** and one of the world's leading virologists, says the much-anticipated prospect of millions of vials of C-19 vaccine being available in September or October, is “highly unlikely,” reported *MedicalBrief*. (11 June 2020) “We have to think of societies living with C-19, just like with HIV.”

There were no short cuts to coming up with quality, peer-reviewed solutions, he said. Rigorous, large scale clinical trials testing candidate drugs, (where a reasonable hypothesis existed), were non-negotiable – because of the millions of people who might suffer harm if this was not done.

Finding an anti-viral therapy, (AVT), quickly and using it as a pre and post exposure prophylaxis was vital, while the use of both AVT and immune-suppressants early on would be hugely effective.