

Common drug colchicine brings hope to COVID fight: Canadian research

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A major clinical trial in Canada shows that an inexpensive anti-inflammatory drug called colchicine can significantly reduce the risk of complications and death from COVID-19, bringing "important hope" to sufferers, the lead researcher said Sunday.

Jean-Claude Tardif, head of the Montreal Heart Institute (ICM), led the study named "Colcorona," whose preliminary results were published Friday evening.

The complete results will be made public "as quickly as possible," he said during an interview with AFP.

Q: What are the main conclusions of your study, conducted on 4,488 patients throughout the world since March 2020?

A: The Colcorona study provided convincing results of a more than 20 percent reduction in hospitalizations or deaths related to COVID-19 with colchicine, compared to the placebo... When dealing with patients who have had a test that officially proves their COVID-19 diagnosis, the result with colchicine is even better, that is, a reduction of 25 percent in hospitalizations, 50

percent in need for a ventilator and 44 percent in deaths.

The hypothesis behind the study was that the reason patients develop complications from COVID is the exaggerated [inflammatory response](#) that a patient's white blood cells develop in reaction to the virus... Our intuition was that by using a drug like colchicine to reduce this exaggerated inflammatory reaction, known as "cytokine storms," could prevent complications.

Q: Why do you think the results are so important in the global fight against the pandemic?

A: Colchicine is a powerful anti-inflammatory drug that has been known for a very long time, it was discovered 150 years ago. It's extracted from a plant called *Colchicum autumnale* and is used to treat various diseases such as gout, an inflammatory arthritis, and pericarditis among others.

The beauty of the study's results is that colchicine is already available in pharmacies, since it is used safely and inexpensively for many diseases... Our discovery won't just be useful in France, Canada and the US and G8 countries, but (also in) developing nations, [poor countries](#), Africa, Asia will quickly benefit from inexpensive colchicine, which is taken orally in tablet form.

Our results bring important hope for patients, healthcare systems and governments. Finally, we are providing part of a significant solution to reduce hospitalizations and eventually reduce congestion in the hospital system.

Q: Scientists are waiting now for the complete results of your study, when do you plan to publish them?

A: We are submitting the manuscript to a major scientific journal today (Sunday). I obviously can't

presume the publication date, the journal will do its work, it's one of the biggest journals in the world. We will share the rest of the results as fast as possible, possibly even before the final publication (in the journal). We are convinced that our results are conclusive, convincing and can be used immediately to benefit patients.

There will probably be a rapid review by [regulatory agencies](#), EMA (European Medicines Agency), Health Canada in Canada, the FDA in the US, who will quickly review the data... Now I think that doctors don't have to wait for this regulatory review by the agencies... Doctors, health practitioners, will be able to prescribe it immediately because it is already available.

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