



## State of Utah Board of Pharmacy

September 29, 2020

### **Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine guidance**

To ensure patient access to medications during the COVID-19 outbreak and to incorporate safety guidance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Utah Board of Pharmacy is providing the following guidance regarding the dispensing of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine for treatment of COVID-19.

The FDA reviewed the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine in patients with COVID-19. A July 1, 2020 update identified safety and efficacy concerns regarding the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19 outside of the hospital setting or clinical trial.

*“The FDA is aware of reports of serious heart rhythm problems in patients with COVID-19 treated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, often in combination with azithromycin and other QT prolonging medicines. We are also aware of increased use of these medicines through outpatient prescriptions. Therefore, we would like to remind health care professionals and patients of the known risks associated with both hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine. We will continue to investigate risks associated with the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine for COVID-19 and communicate publicly when we have more information.*”

*Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine have not been shown to be safe and effective for treating or preventing COVID-19. They are being studied in clinical trials for COVID-19, and we authorized their temporary use during the COVID-19 pandemic for treatment of the virus in **hospitalized** patients when clinical trials are not available, or participation is not feasible, through an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).*<sup>1</sup>”

In addition to the guidance issued by the FDA, the National Institutes of Health published the following recommendations on August 27, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

- Recommends against the use of chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19 in hospitalized patients.

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**<sup>1</sup> FDA Cautions Against Use of Hydroxychloroquine or Chloroquine for COVID-19 Outside of the Hospital Setting or a Clinical Trial due to a Risk of Heart Rhythm Problems. 2020, July 1**

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-cautions-against-use-hydroxychloroquine-or-chloroquine-covid-19-outside-hospital-setting-or>

**<sup>2</sup> NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines. Chloroquine or Hydroxychloroquine with or without Azithromycin.**  
<https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/antiviral-therapy/chloroquine-or-hydroxychloroquine-with-or-without-azithromycin/>

- Recommends against the use of chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19 in non-hospitalized patients, except in a clinical trial.
- Recommends against the use of high-dose chloroquine (600 mg twice daily for 10 days) for the treatment of COVID-19.
- Recommends against using hydroxychloroquine plus azithromycin to treat COVID-19, except in a clinical trial.

Department of Health encourages both medical providers and pharmacists to follow established guidelines when prescribing and dispensing these medications.

### **Hydroxychloroquine and Chloroquine Prescription Considerations**

Physicians are responsible for making a diagnosis and prescribing treatments for their patients. Pharmacists have a corresponding responsibility and must use professional judgement when dispensing a prescription. The Utah Board of Pharmacy encourages pharmacists to use their professional judgement to evaluate medications prescribed off-label for COVID-19 prevention and treatment. Discuss concerns with the provider to ensure the medication is safe for the individual patient, the dose and quantity are appropriately prescribed, and drug interactions are evaluated with the patient's other medications.