

# Drug used to treat lice and scabies drug could cut Covid deaths by up to 75%, research suggests

A cheap and safe drug widely used against parasites cuts Covid infections, hospitalisations and deaths by about 75 per cent, a study shows.

More than 30 trials across the world found that ivermectin causes 'repeated, consistent, large magnitude improvements in clinical outcomes' at all stages of the disease.

The peer-reviewed study, to be published in the US journal *Frontiers of Pharmacology*, says the evidence is so strong that the drug – used to treat head lice and scabies – should become a standard therapy everywhere, so hastening the global recovery.

Study co-author Professor Paul Marik, director of emergency and pulmonary care at the Eastern [Virginia](#) Medical School in the US, said: 'The data is overwhelming – we are in a pandemic, and this is an incredibly effective way to combat it. If we use ivermectin widely, our societies can open up.'



More than 30 trials across the world found that ivermectin causes 'repeated, consistent, large magnitude improvements in clinical outcomes' at all stages of the disease (stock image)

Other medications have been touted as effective treatments for combating coronavirus, only for trials to dash hopes – notably with hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malarial drug.

An earlier study by Professor Andrew Hill of Liverpool University also concluded that ivermectin cuts death rates by around three-quarters.

He recommended there should be larger trials before it was approved by UK regulators. A new trial of ivermectin as a Covid treatment is due to start shortly at Oxford University.

Dr Tess Lawrie, director of the Evidence-Based Medicine Consultancy in Bath, convened an online summit of

international experts last weekend to discuss the new data. It included evidence that widespread use of ivermectin in parts of India and South America has led to a big reduction in infections and deaths.



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Yesterday Dr Lawrie submitted a 97-page report to the World Health Organisation, urging it immediately to recommend ivermectin to treat Covid.

The drug, taken in tablet form or as drops, is licensed in Britain only as a treatment for parasitic worms, head lice and scabies.

It has been used by hundreds of millions of patients over

the past 30 years, mainly in developing countries, and at around £50 per patient – less in some countries – is far cheaper than other new Covid treatments, such as the rheumatism drug tocilizumab, which costs £1,000 per patient.

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency said it was aware of the global study into the use of ivermectin to treat Covid-19 and that its evidence would be reviewed.