

Turkey using drug from China for coronavirus

March 23 2020

Turkey's health minister said Monday that the country is using a drug sent from China on patients suffering from the novel coronavirus.

"From this morning we have brought a special drug used in China which is claimed to have resulted in improvements in intensive care patients, cutting their time in care from 11-12 days to four days," Fahrettin Koca told reporters.

He did not give more information on the drug but the anti-malarial drug chloroquine has recently been used to treat coronavirus patients in China as well as France.

Some researchers have said chloroquine shows great promise, though scientists have agreed that more trials are needed to determine if the drug is really effective and safe.

According to figures released late Monday, Turkey has officially recorded 1,529 coronavirus cases and 37 deaths.

Koca said 50,000 rapid detection kits had arrived from China on Monday and had begun to be used, with 300,000 expected by Thursday.

The minister added that the Chinese government agreed with Turkey to share information on the novel coronavirus as the two countries step up cooperation to fight against the pandemic.

While Koca did not detail where the positive cases were in Turkey, he said the virus had spread across the country.

He did say there were fewer than 10 cases in Turkey's Van province, which borders badly-hit Iran.

He also said some health workers had caught the coronavirus, without giving figures.

A further 32,000 health workers will be employed during the crisis, he told a press conference in Ankara.

Koca also said that face masks produced in Turkey "will not be exported" as the country was in need.

There had been speculation that Koca might announce a state of emergency, but he urged Turks to "announce their own state of emergency" as he insisted citizens adhere to measures already announced by Ankara.

Turkish authorities have ordered those aged 65 and above and those with chronic illnesses to stay at home, while most public spaces have been temporarily closed.

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