EU authorises use of remdesivir to treat coronavirus

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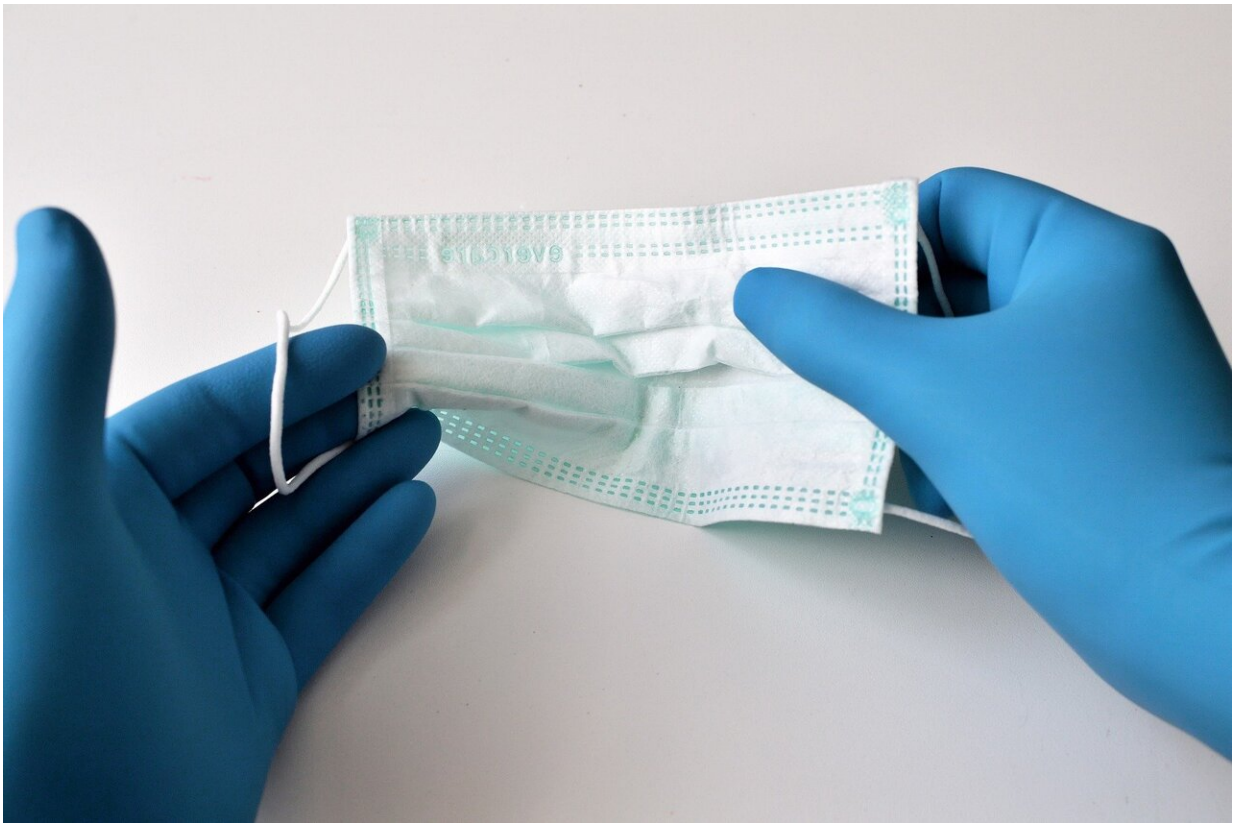

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The European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, on Friday authorised the use of anti-viral drug remdesivir to treat the new coronavirus.

"Today's authorisation of a first medicine to treat COVID-19 is an important step forward in the fight against this virus," EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said in a statement.

"We are granting this authorisation less than a month after the application was submitted, showing clearly the EU's determination to respond quickly whenever new treatments become available," she said.

At least two major US studies have shown that remdesivir can reduce the duration of hospital stays for COVID-19 patients.

Washington authorised the emergency use of the medicine—which was originally intended as a treatment for Ebola—on May 1, followed by several Asian nations including Japan and South Korea.

The green light comes on the recomendation of the European Medicines Agency which gave its conditional authorisation last week for the treatment of patients above 12 years of age who are suffering pneumonia and require extra oxygen.

It said its assessment was based mainly based on data from a study sponsored by the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

The research, published in the leading journal the *New England Journal of Medicine* in May, showed that injections of remdesivir speeded patient recovery compared with a placebo.

On average it reduced patients' hospital stays from 15 days to 11.