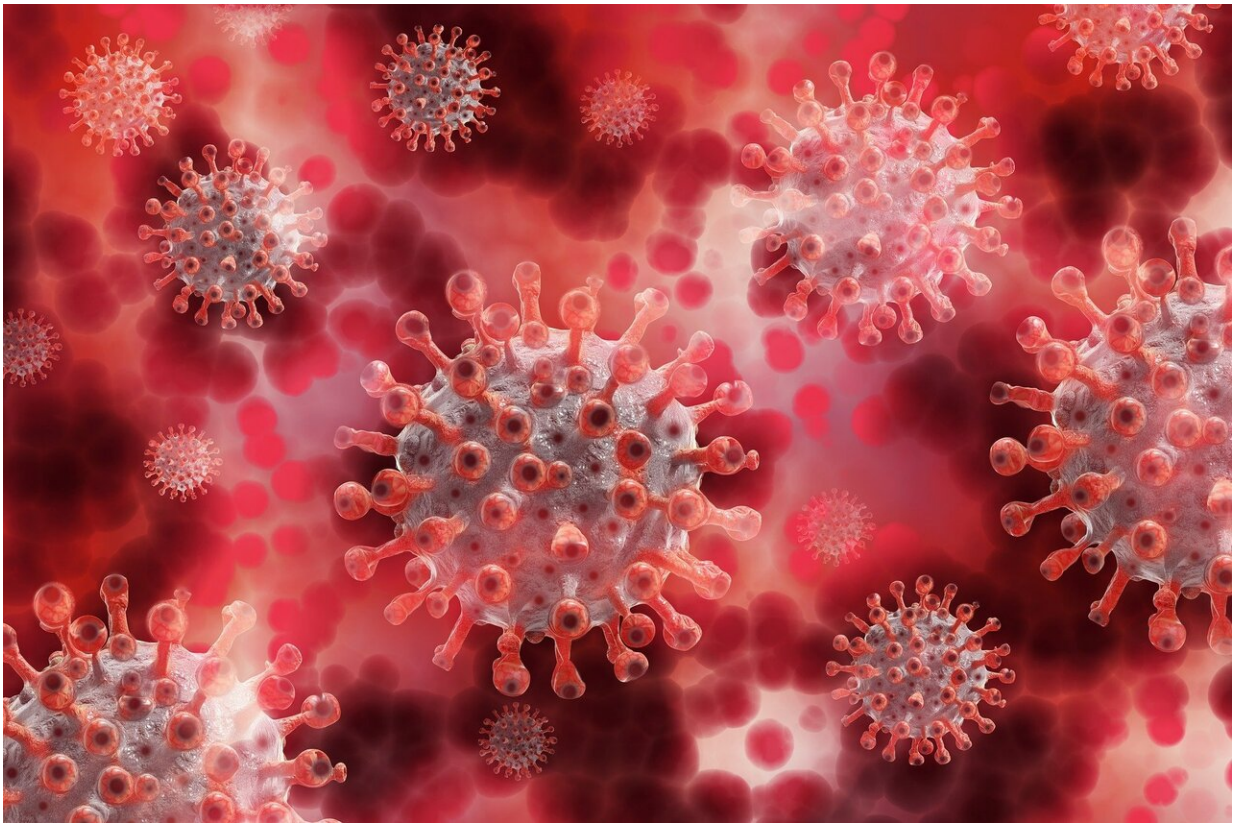


Medical row in France over unauthorised COVID trial

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French medical bodies on Sunday called on authorities to punish researcher Didier Raoult for "the largest 'unauthorized' clinical trial ever seen" into the use of hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19.

Raoult, the former head of the IHU Mediterranee research hospital, and his subordinates engaged in "systematic prescription of medications as varied as hydroxychloroquine, zinc, ivermectin and azithromycin to patients suffering from COVID-19... without a solid pharmacological basis and lacking any proof of their effectiveness," a group of 16 research bodies wrote in an op-ed piece on daily Le Monde's website.

The drugs continued to be prescribed "for more than a year after their ineffectiveness had been absolutely demonstrated," they added.

Endorsement from respected tropical disease specialist Raoult helped push anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine into the public consciousness in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, feeding into its promotion by former US President Donald Trump and Brazil's then-leader Jair Bolosonaro.

In April, France's ANSM medications authority said that treatment with hydroxychloroquine "exposes patients to potential side effects that can be serious".

The doctors' bodies said Sunday that authorities should take "measures appropriate to the infractions" for the sake of patient safety and "the credibility of French medical research".

Raoult in March published a "pre-print" study—not yet submitted for scientific peer review—into treatment of more than 30,000 COVID-19 patients.

So far no one has been charged in a probe opened last year by Marseille prosecutors into fraud and unwarranted human testing at the IHU Mediterranee, based in the southern port city.

The government has also requested an investigation into the IHU's

conduct under Raoult's management following a harsh report from inspectors.

Health Minister Francois Braun told broadcaster RTL on Sunday that he would not comment on an open investigation, but confirmed that the latest study would be included in the probe's remit.

Raoult retired as a professor in summer 2021 and was replaced at the IHU Mediterranee last August.

A spokesman said he remained an emeritus professor and was still supervising two doctoral students who began work on their theses before he left.

At the IHU itself, all [clinical trials](#) involving humans have been suspended since Raoult's replacement Pierre-Edouard Fournier took over.

The hospital told AFP it was waiting for the ANSM [drug](#) regulator's word before resuming the trials.

"The IHU has to show it has met expectations" before human testing would be allowed, the ANSM said, without setting out a timeframe.

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