

US judge orders hospital to treat COVID patient with ivermectin

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A US woman has won a court order for a hospital in Ohio to treat her husband, who is on a ventilator with COVID-19, with the antiparasitic medicine ivermectin, as demand surges for the unproven coronavirus treatment.

The case is one of several nationwide where courts have sided with litigants seeking to use the drug, despite scant evidence of its effectiveness against COVID and a rise in calls to poison centers as a result of misuse, including ingesting livestock-strength formulations.

Judge Gregory Howard ordered West Chester Hospital, located outside Cincinnati, to treat Julie Smith's husband Jeffrey Smith with ivermectin, according to an order filed August 23.

Smith had received a prescription from physician Fred Wagshul, who is listed on the website for a group called "Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance" that advocates for use of ivermectin.

She is being represented by lawyer Ralph Lorigo, who has won similar cases in New York and

Chicago.

Since the start of the COVID pandemic, there has been considerable interest in repurposing existing medications.

Ivermectin attracted much attention, particularly in Latin America, and early lab studies suggested it might have beneficial properties for fighting the coronavirus.

But, as is often the case, promise in lab settings has so far failed to translate to real world success, as judged by its lack of clear efficacy in trials.

The National Institutes of Health says there is not enough evidence "either for or against the use of ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19" until clear results become available from rigorous trials.

Ivermectin is approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat people with certain conditions caused by [parasitic worms](#), but the agency has warned people against using it for COVID.

A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that by mid-August, physicians were writing out more than 88,000 prescriptions of the drug per week—well above the pre-pandemic baseline of 3,600.

Poison control centers have seen a three-fold increase in the number of calls for ivermectin overdoses.

One case involved an adult drinking an injectable ivermectin formulation intended for cattle and becoming hospitalized for nine days with confusion, drowsiness, hallucinations, rapid breathing and tremors.

Another person bought ivermectin of unknown strength from the internet, took it five times a day

for five days, and presented to hospital disoriented and unable to answer questions or follow commands. The symptoms improved after they discontinued use.

The popularity of [ivermectin](#) against COVID has drawn comparisons to a hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malarial drug that was particularly favored by conservatives last year, despite no strong evidence of real world efficacy.

High-profile proponents include Fox News hosts Laura Ingraham and Sean Hannity, as well as Republican Senator Ron Johnson.

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