

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“Cow and Horse Drug Poisoning in Attempts to Treat COVID-19”

Some people are attempting to treat and prevent COVID-19 by taking ivermectin, a medication frequently used to de-worm cows and horses and they are poisoning themselves in the process. There has been an increase in calls to poison control centers because of ivermectin. Ivermectin is commonly used as an anti-parasite cream on dogs, cats, and horses. It can eliminate lice, scabies, and worms in mammals. Rather than waiting to get the drug through proper channels, people are instead getting equestrian prescriptions through their vets and using horse-sized doses on themselves. The buzz around ivermectin has been generated by the FLCCC, the Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC), which formed at the start of the pandemic. It comprises critical care workers who previously bonded over the controversial use of vitamin C for sepsis. While the FLCCC has held press conferences saying studies show the drug could fight against the novel coronavirus, public health agencies and many experts say the research is lacking. US regulators say there is not enough robust evidence or safety data to recommend ivermectin as a cure, treatment, or preventative medicine for COVID-19. The National Institutes of Health issued a statement earlier this month, refusing to support the use of ivermectin to treat COVID-19 until clinical trials in humans find it to be safe and effective. The US Food and Drug Administration has also told Americans not to self-administer ivermectin intended for animals. Ivermectin is currently being studied in humans for treating COVID-19. And researchers recently showed that ivermectin, a drug used to treat parasitic infections, reduced the growth of SARS-CoV-2 in the laboratory setting. Ivermectin can be tolerated in small doses but can poison an adult in large quantities. While smaller doses of the medication can be tolerated by humans, with few side effects aside from nausea, rashes, and increased heart rate, taking a dose of ivermectin intended for an animal the size of a compact car can poison you. According to the Missouri Poison Center serious overdoses of ivermectin can result in seizures, coma, lung issues, and heart problems. Experts are urging people to avoid the lure of fake "cures," which could cause health problems as bad or worse than a COVID-19 infection. The number of people who have accidentally poisoned themselves with household cleaners trying to disinfect their homes has jumped by 20% since the beginning pandemic.

In the America that I love, we must rely on good old common sense but still try to find any reliable scientific truths. Experts recommend that people refrain from taking their pet's medication and instead wait to get one of the COVID-19 vaccines or seek medical attention if they believe they have been infected with the coronavirus.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

rhowesmd@hughes.net

| www.iwillfindthecure.org

