



By Sidonie Canetto, Grégoire Bézie Published on 3/16/2020 at 8:41 PM Updated on 03/20/2020 at 09:50

US President Donald Trump has predicted an imminent use of chloroquine, an antimalarial, as a possible treatment for Covid-19 patients after encouraging results in China and France.

"We will be able to make this drug available almost immediately," said Donald Trump at a press conference in the White House, when the Republican senators presented a bailout of about 1.000 billion dollars for the economy. .

## Chloroquine, the United States approves the treatment

Based on the tests of Professor Raoult and his team at the IHU in Marseille, the United States announces the launch of large-scale tests on its territory to eradicate the Covid-19.

"It's very exciting. I think it could be a game-changer. Or maybe not. But from what I've seen, it could be a game-changer," he added.

But many experts have called for caution in pointing out the lack of solid, public clinical data.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the federal agency that oversees the marketing of drugs in the United States, somewhat tempered the presidential enthusiasm by pointing out that the treatment had not been approved for the coronavirus.

But it will set up "an extended clinical trial," said Stephen Hahn, its leader.

## Chloroquine clinical trials also in France

As France faces a surge in containment measures to escape the spread of the (<https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/carte-epidemie-du-coronavirus-continue-progresser-provence-alpes-cote-azur-570-cas-detectes-7-deces-1796747.html>) Covid-19 coronavirus (<https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/carte-epidemie-du-coronavirus-continue-progresser-provence-alpes-cote-azur-570-cas-detectes-7-deces-1796747.html>) , there is hope for medical treatment.

"The clinical trials of chloroquine, an antimalarial, carried out in Marseille to treat patients with Covid-19 are" promising "and will be extended, the government said on Tuesday.

" I have taken note of the results and I have given permission for a larger trial by other teams to be initiated as soon as possible on a larger number of patients, "said the Minister of Health during a telephone press conference Olivier Véran, specifying that these tests " (<http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/nord-0/lille/coronavirus-trois-questions-chloroquine-ce-traitement-contre-covid-19-bientot-teste-au-chu-lille-1801776.html>)

## Treatment offered to 24 patients on March 16

Professor Raoult announced on Monday March 16 that the first cases treated at the IHU, the reference center for covid-19, with chloroquine are on the mend.

The treatment was offered to 24 patients, among the first infected in the south-east of France, admitted to the IHU on a voluntary basis.

As usual, Professor Didier Raoult, director of the IHU in Marseille, posted the conclusions of his essay online in a video.

*"We included in this treatment the people who agreed, they almost all agreed. Two cities without the protocol, Nice and Avignon provided us with patients who did not receive the treatment" , explains the epidemiologist .*

*"We have seen that patients who(hydroxychloroquine, note) were still carriers after six days, whereas when you put Plaquenil, after six days, there are only 25% of carriers . "*

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The viral load is even lower in patients treated in addition with an antibiotic, azithromycin, according to the specialist.

Professor Raoult had obtained the agreement of the health authorities to test a treatment with chloroquine on patients at the IHU, last March 9.

"We have applied for the clinical trial of the treatment like any other trial, namely from the Ministry of Health, from the personal protection committee. The trial involves 24 patients", specifies Professor Chabrière, infectious disease specialist at the IHU.

Chloroquine is a drug commonly used against malaria and inexpensive, the virtues of which the director of the Mediterranean Infection Institute had praised at the end of February, based on a Chinese study.

This treatment uses a precise dosage: "600 mg per day for ten days", details the professor in his intervention.



The Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire Méditerranée Infection, the Covid-19 reference center, in Marseille (Bouches-du-Rhône). / © VALERIE VREL / MaxPPP

## A molecule criticized for these side effects

The use of this molecule is strongly criticized due to drug interactions and problems of side effects, especially in patients in intensive care.

In addition, this trial was conducted on a very marginal number of patients. Reduced to the number of cases of coronavirus in France, more than 6,000 Monday evening, these results are to be interpreted with caution, according to the scientific community.

There is an urgent need to organize such recommendations in France.

However, for Professor Raoult, member of the scientific council on the new coronavirus implemented by the Minister of Health, there are enough arguments to use this treatment, which is very inexpensive, now in patients with Covid-19, explains [Le Monde](https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2020/03/17/la-chloroquine-une-piste-pour-lutter-contre-le-sars-cov-2_6033364_1650684.html) ([https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2020/03/17/la-chloroquine-une-piste-pour-lutter-contre-le-sars-cov-2\\_6033364\\_1650684.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2020/03/17/la-chloroquine-une-piste-pour-lutter-contre-le-sars-cov-2_6033364_1650684.html)).

"In China, Iran, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are already part of the therapeutic protocols, advised by experts, some of them world renowned. There is an urgent need to organize such recommendations in France, and that's what I proposed to the health authorities."

Thursday morning, on France inter, among others, Denis Malvy, infectiologist at the Bordeaux University Hospital and member of the Scientific Council who advises the president in the fight against the epidemic declared that chloroquine was a "serious research track".

The French laboratory Sanofi announces that it can offer the French authorities millions of doses of Plaquenil, the anti-malarial treatment for 300,000 patients.

This announcement comes after tests deemed "promising" on patients with Covid-19 in Marseille.

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12/13

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19/20

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