

Tulane to study whether anti-malarial drug blocks spread of COVID-19

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Hydroxychloroquine is a commonly used anti-malarial and autoimmune drug. (Stock photo)

Researchers at Tulane University are investigating whether hydroxychloroquine – a commonly used anti-malarial and autoimmune drug – can prevent COVID-19.

They are recruiting anyone who has been in close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19 to participate in the study to determine whether hydroxychloroquine can prevent transmission in people exposed to the virus.

Currently, there is no proven way to prevent COVID-19 after being exposed, said [Patricia Kissinger](#), PhD, infectious disease epidemiologist at Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

“If this trial is successful, it will provide people with another prevention measure in addition to staying at home and practicing physical distancing to slow the pandemic and continue to flatten the curve,” said Kissinger, who is leading the study at Tulane with [Dr. Alfred Luk](#), assistant professor of medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine.

The University of Washington Department of Global Health/International Clinical Research Center and the NYU Grossman School of Medicine are leading the multi-site clinical trial, which will enroll 2,000 participants in New Orleans, western Washington; the greater New York metro area, Syracuse, NY; Baltimore-Washington; Boston and Los Angeles.

Tulane hopes to enroll 500 participants locally.

Participants will be randomly assigned to take hydroxychloroquine or a placebo over two weeks, and nasal swab samples will be collected and tested daily to confirm new COVID-19 infections across the two groups. The trial is slated to run over eight weeks.

“The entire study is done at home,” Kissinger said. “We will courier the medicine to participants. They have telemedicine visits and a courier comes to pick up their swabs. Patients are reimbursed for their time. Patients need to self-collect nasal swabs every day for 14 days and then another swab at day 28 for COVID-19 testing.”

Those interested in enrolling should call (504) 289-4076 or visit www.covid19pepstudy.org and enter the code 44-000-066.

The study is part of a \$125 million initiative launched by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome Trust, and Mastercard to speed development and access to therapies against COVID-19. The three organizations are partners in the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator.