

# Hydroxychloroquine

May 15, 2020

**Source:** *The Hindu*

**Manifest pedagogy:** India's gesture of helping the USA with the drug has played a crucial role at difficult times. The antimalarial drug has to be studied emphasising on its content, use and side effects. Also, it has to be studied from the angle of diplomacy.

**In news:** India has shipped hydroxychloroquine tablets to 13 countries in first consignment.

**Placing it in syllabus:** Diseases

**Static dimensions:** What is Hydroxychloroquine?

**Current dimensions:**

- HCQ for Coronavirus
- India and HCQ

**Content:** India has relaxed the ban on exports of paracetamol and HCQ, both used in Covid-19 therapies and has placed them in the licensed category. SAARC nations particularly Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh are among the **30 countries who recently asked India to lift the ban on the export of HCQ.**

**What is Hydroxychloroquine?**

- Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) oral tablet is an **anti-malarial drug** under the **brand name Plaquenil.**
- It is used to **treat malaria, lupus erythematosus, and rheumatoid arthritis.**
- It's also available in a generic version which usually costs less than the brand-name version.
- It may be **used as part of a combination therapy** where it is taken with other drugs.

**More common side effects** include headache, dizziness,, stomach cramps and vomiting.

**Serious side effects** include blurred vision, heart disease including heart failure, hearing loss, angioedema (rapid swelling of skin), sore throat, severe hypoglycemia and unusual bleeding or bruising.

#### Hydroxychloroquine for Coronavirus:

- Hydroxychloroquine has been **identified by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** as a possible treatment for the COVID-19 and it is being tested on more than 1,500 coronavirus patients in New York.
- The US has asked for 48 lakh tablets of hydroxychloroquine from India.
- Due to high global demand for HCQ, **recently India issued an order restricting the export of HCQ on a “case-by-case” basis.**
- But due to the **US threat of retaliation** in case of non-release of the stocks of the drug, **India partially lifted the ban and is exporting HCQ and paracetamol.**
- However, scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (**ICMR**) **have advised people not to take HCQ without a prescription** as Chloroquine can be deadly if not dosed properly.
- As only a few clinical trials have shown limited success of the drug, **scientists are warning against the mass-prescribing of HCQ** to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.
- But **HCQ has shown the ability to curb the spread of the virus by preventing it from replicating.**
- Other researchers have stated that **cough, pneumonia and fever were treated faster** in patients who were given HCQ over others who were not given the drug.
- **Currently, two large trials are underway to study the effectiveness of HCQ and chloroquine, in COVID-19 treatment:** One is a **solidarity trail run by the WHO** to test a common HCQ treatment protocol and the other is

called the “**chloroquine accelerator trial**,” by Wellcome Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

### India and HCQ:

- **India is the world's largest manufacturer of HCQ.**
- Around 30 countries including the US have asked India to supply them with HCQ.
- As its **first consignment** India has shipped HCQ tablets to 13 countries which include **US, Spain, Germany, Bahrain, Brazil, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Mauritius and the Dominican Republic.**
- India has sanctioned 35.82 lakhs tablets along with 9 metric tonne **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)** as per US request.
- **Brazil, Canada and Germany** are expected to get 50 lakh tablets each of HCQ in the **second consignment.**
- The countries slated to receive paracetamol from India in next consignment are the **UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and a few African nations.**
- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** will process the applications and the **Department of pharmaceuticals** will assess those based on the supply and requirement in India.
- The **commerce department** will then direct customs officials to release those consignments for export.
- The **countries are shortlisted on a first come first serve basis.**
- **Zydus Cadila and Ipca Laboratories** are the biggest Hydroxychloroquine manufacturers in India, which have **backward integrated production capacity** that allows them to convert key raw materials to intermediates and then finally to APIs that subsequently lead to the final formulations.
- **Intas Pharmaceuticals, McW Healthcare of Indore, Macleods Pharmaceuticals, Cipla and Lupin** are the other

manufacturers who can produce the drug.

**Mould your thoughts:** Is Hydroxychloroquine(HCQ) a potent drug for coronavirus? How is India helping the world in battling coronavirus using HCQ?