



Chloroquine Clinical Trial

The Trial

As part of our contribution to the Whole-of-Government COVID-19 response, Defence has initiated a voluntary clinical trial of chloroquine as a preventative measure against COVID-19.

The trial is testing an existing and well-known drug for a new purpose.

The study sponsor is Defence Materials Technology Centre (DMTC), a Melbourne-based, not-for-profit company leading a national medical countermeasures program with support from Defence and other Government agencies. DMTC's research team is working with the Australian Defence Force Malaria and Infectious Disease Institute to conduct the trial.

This trial, involving both civilian and military healthcare workers, is examining whether this drug can prevent COVID-19. It is not being tested as a treatment and is not a vaccine trial.

Each trial participant will be involved for 14 weeks. The research will be conducted over several months and its duration will depend on how the pandemic evolves. Up to 700 healthcare volunteers will be sought, with results expected to take about 12 months to finalise.

The Drug

Chloroquine has been used to treat malaria for 70 years and its efficacy and safety profile is well established having been taken safely by more than a billion people.

Chloroquine has been observed to stop the COVID-19 virus replicating in laboratory testing.

The dosage used in this trial is substantially less than that used for other COVID-19 research trials around the world.

During the trial, volunteers will be given a once-off three-day loading dose of 300mg chloroquine base per day, followed by a weekly 300mg chloroquine base dose for nine weeks. The trial dose is taken as 500mg of chloroquine phosphate which contains 300mg of chloroquine base.

Other Trials

There are other major international clinical trials in development, involving healthcare volunteers to test whether Chloroquine can prevent, reduce or treat the impacts of COVID-19. The Defence trial is focused on chloroquine's effectiveness as a preventative measure only, not a treatment.

The Volunteers

The trial is seeking up to 700 civilian and military healthcare workers to participate.

The safety of all those involved in the trial, including our ADF personnel, is our highest priority. Participation in this trial is entirely voluntary. Potential volunteers must individually access and read online information, watch a video explaining the trial, and attend an in-person evaluation. They are then carefully screened against a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. A participant advocate will also provide volunteers with a confidential mechanism to provide advice and support.

During the trial, volunteers will fill out daily questionnaires detailing the current state of their health and wellbeing, which will be closely monitored. Blood samples will also be taken three times over the 14 week trial period, at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of their participation. Volunteers can remove themselves from the trial at any time for any reason with no consequences.

The Importance

There is an urgent need to find a medical countermeasure that protects those on the frontline against COVID-19. Millions around the world have contracted COVID-19 and hundreds of thousands of people have died from infection. Countries must find a way to protect healthcare workers, who put their wellbeing at risk, to ensure health systems can manage the effects from this pandemic.

ADF capabilities are not immune to the threat of COVID-19, as such there is a need for Defence involvement with this trial. We need to maintain a sovereign capacity to develop such medical countermeasures in the interests of protecting our nation.