

Steroid shows promise in treating serious Covid-19 cases

A readily available steroid could be the breakthrough needed in treating seriously ill Covid-19 patients.



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The [Recovery Trial](#), based at Oxford University, [published results](#) on the therapeutic merits of low dose dexamethasone, which is used to treat allergic reactions, asthma and other conditions where the inflammatory component of the disease needs to be controlled for better outcomes.

Dexamethasone has been proven to reduced deaths by one-third in patients on ventilator. It reduced fatalities by a fifth among those who received oxygen support.

The finding came from the world's biggest trial testing existing treatments on Covid-19 patients. More than 11,500 patients in 175 UK hospitals are part of the trial, and more than 2,100 of them received 6mg of dexamethasone once per day.

Reduced mortality

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has welcomed the initial clinical trial and said they are looking forward to the full data analysis in the coming days.

While daily doses of dexamethasone could prevent one in eight ventilated patient deaths and save one out of every 25

patients requiring oxygen, the steroid had no effect on outcomes among those with mild cases of Covid-19 (people not receiving oxygen or ventilation), the study found. “For patients on ventilators, the treatment was shown to reduce mortality by about one third, and for patients requiring only oxygen, mortality was cut by about one fifth,” according to preliminary findings shared with WHO.

The agency said the benefit is only visible in seriously ill Covid-19 patients and not those with milder disease.

“This is the first treatment to be shown to reduce mortality in patients with Covid-19 requiring oxygen or ventilator support.

“This is great news and I congratulate the Government of the UK, the University of Oxford and the many hospitals and patients in the UK who have contributed to this lifesaving scientific breakthrough,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general.

The regulated price per dexamethasone injection is between R149 and R176 in South Africa. It is typically used to treat arthritis and breathing disorders. The drug is easily implementable in South Africa, said Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize.

Aspen produces dexamethasone injections in South Africa. Other companies including Adcock Ingram and Sanofi are registered to distribute dexamethasone in South Africa.

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