

March 20, 2020

*Disclaimer: We are receiving frequent COVID-related questions about drug concerns and potential interactions. This information is as March 20, 2020. We will do our best to keep you up to date with this ever evolving situation. This is the most update information at the time of publication.*

## **FDA UPDATE REGARDING HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE/CHLOROQUINE**

On March 28, 2020, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) that will allow donated supplies of both hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine products to be used specifically for treatment of hospitalized COVID-19 patients. The medication will come from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) in hopes to help alleviate the short supply for those already on these medications for their autoimmune diseases. However, as of April 1, 2020, there is a national shortage of both hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine (per the FDA).

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-daily-roundup-march-30-2020>

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-daily-roundup-march-31-2020>

## **MEDICATION LIMITATIONS IN TEXAS**

As of March 20, The Texas State Board of Pharmacy adopted a rule with medication limitations on chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine, mefloquine, or azithromycin. The following criteria must be met for dispensing:

- The prescription or medication order bears a written diagnosis from the prescriber consistent with the evidence for its use;
- The prescription or medication order is limited to no more than 14 day supply, unless the patient was previously established on the medication prior to the effective rule date; and
- No refills are permitted unless a new prescription or medication order is furnished.
- [https://www.pharmacy.texas.gov/files\\_pdf/291.30.pdf](https://www.pharmacy.texas.gov/files_pdf/291.30.pdf)

The Texas State Board of Pharmacy noted the following clarifying guidance regarding the new rule:

“The rule does not prevent a physician from prescribing one of these drugs for an off-label **use.**” The intent of the rule is to prevent stockpiling by “preventing unreasonable quantities being prescribed, which tend to relate to “hoarding or stockpiling tactics”.

The goal is of course to ensure “reasonable quantities are available for ALL patients that require therapy with the drugs, including patients with a COVID-19 diagnosis.” **“In addition, the rule does not apply to a prescription issued for a patient already established on the medication (e.g., prescription to treat rheumatoid arthritis or lupus for already established patients).”**

<https://www.pharmacy.texas.gov/coronavirus/>

## **POTENTIAL DRUG SHORTAGES**

The Health Plan of Southwestern Health Resources, Care N’ Care, has been monitoring potential drug shortages related to COVID-19 in outpatient settings at both a local and national level. Care N’ Care is able to gather data from up-to-the-minute pharmacy claims, as well as information coming into the call center from its members and pharmacies. The shortages are confirmed through the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) [website](#) . The notable findings are:

### **Albuterol Sulfate Metered Dose Inhalers**

- The shortage was reported by ASHP on March 24, 2020. Care N’ Care claims are continuing to be processed, indicating local pharmacies still have albuterol inhalers on hand. It is difficult to predict if a shortage will occur locally; however, there is an alternative option if appropriate. Albuterol nebulizer solution may be used for non-hospitalized patients without COVID-19 if necessary.

### **Hydroxychloroquine/Chloroquine**

- The shortage was reported by ASHP on March 24, 2020, and by the FDA on April 1, 2020. Care N’ Care continues to see claims processed for hydroxychloroquine; however, a recent member did have difficulty in obtaining this drug. It is possible that a drug shortage at local pharmacies may occur and affect patients who are taking it for maintenance in treating a chronic condition.

### **Hydrocortisone**

- The shortage was reported by ASHP on March 26, 2020. Care N’ Care has had one member report difficulty in obtaining hydrocortisone 5mg tablets. This is likely due to the fact that a significant amount of hydrocortisone products come from China. It may be necessary to switch patients to other corticosteroids if needed.

Please continue to monitor the SWHR website for news on emerging risks for drug shortages. For additional information and updates on drug shortages, please visit the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists or the FDA websites.

( <https://www.ashp.org/Drug-Shortages/Current-Shortages> )

( <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm> )

## **VITAMIN C**

Claims that Vitamin C serves as treatment and prophylaxis for COVID-19 have been circulating in the news in recent days. There is a lack of data to support either use. Vitamin C has not been shown to prevent a COVID-19 infection or treat symptoms associated with COVID-19; therefore, it is not recommended.