

March 25: COVID-19 Clinical Update

Clinical and Operational Updates, and Treatment Options for Patients

To facilitate the sharing of important clinical information during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis and to help respond to questions from physicians across the health system, Northwestern Medicine is launching a new daily communication for physicians – the COVID-19 Clinical Update.

This resource will provide the most current recommendations for the care and treatment of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection, as well as guidelines to help contain the spread and keep you, your staff and your patients safe. In this first issue, you will find important clinical and operational updates, as well as answers to frequently asked physician questions regarding treatment options for patients with COVID-19.

CLINICAL UPDATES

To assist in caring for patients who require critical care, a new **Critical Care Guidelines section** has been added to the **COVID-19 page on NMI**.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Northwestern Medicine will begin screening employees and visitors as they enter hospital facilities as part of ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of our staff, physicians and patients. Screening at all hospitals begins Wednesday, March 25. For details by region for employee screenings, including which entrances staff must use and where screening areas will be located, please read **Access to NM Facilities and Employee and Physician Screenings**.

COVID-19 TREATMENT OPTIONS

While there is significant interest in providing therapy for patients with COVID-19 to prevent progression or poor outcomes, there is no therapy that has been definitively demonstrated to be effective. There are several agents that are being considered. Among therapies that have generated some discussion – hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, IL-6 antagonists, azithromycin and Lopinavir/ritonavir – none have been definitively shown to be effective in treatment of COVID-19 but can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There are two COVID-19 studies open at Northwestern Medicine to provide evidence on how best to treat patients:

1. **NIH Adaptive COVID-19 Treatment Trial (ACTT)**

2. **Evaluation of the Efficacy and Safety of Sarilumab in Hospitalized Patients with COVID-19**

If you have questions or a patient who should be considered for a clinical trial, contact the NMH COVID Infectious Disease pager at 312.472.6651.

For other patients who may benefit from remdesivir, at present the Gilead compassionate use program is suspended. Please check the [Gilead website](#) for updates on a future expanded access program. For questions regarding non-hospitalized patients with COVID-19, please call the **NM COVID Hotline at 312.47.COVID** or email them to COVID-19MD@nm.org.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q: Should ACE-Inhibitors and ARBs be discontinued in patients with COVID-19?

A: There is currently no data or evidence to support the discontinuation of ACE-Inhibitors or ARBs in patients with COVID-19.

Q: When is treatment of COVID-19 with hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil®) indicated?

A: At this point, the best guidance is that these decisions be made on a case-by-case basis. Hydroxychloroquine is not without some risk in patients with prolonged QT intervals. Also, there are no data that suggest any benefit for the use of hydroxychloroquine for any type of COVID-19 prophylaxis. Indiscriminate use of this medication runs the risk of exacerbating problems of limited supplies, which would prevent patients with conditions where hydroxychloroquine is potentially life-saving, such as lupus, from obtaining the drug.

Q: Is there evidence for use of azithromycin and hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19?

A: Data are limited, and the decision to utilize azithromycin should be based on the need to consider bacterial community-acquired pneumonia along with COVID-19 as the etiology of the patient's clinical presentation.

Q: When is treatment of COVID-19 with remdesivir indicated?

A: Currently, remdesivir is only available via clinical trial at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Information about the remdesivir clinical trial can be found in the [NM ASP Evidence Review for Inpatient Treatment of COVID-19](#). If you have a patient who should be considered for the clinical trial, contact the NMH COVID Infectious Disease pager at 312.472.6651.

Q: When are IL-6 inhibitors (tocilizumab and sarilumab) indicated for COVID-19 treatment?

A: Both of these monoclonal antibodies inhibit IL-6 mediated pro-inflammatory response. Tocilizumab has been utilized in China and Italy in critically ill COVID-19 patients. Supply of both agents is extremely limited. There is currently an active sarilumab clinical trial for COVID-19 patients, which can be considered if the patient qualifies. Information regarding clinical trials can be found in the [NM ASP Evidence Review for Inpatient Treatment of COVID-19](#).

Q: For patients with suspected COVID-19 infection, what should I direct them to take for pain or fever?

A: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a statement on March 19 that they are not aware of evidence associating NSAIDs with worsening symptoms of COVID-19 infections. At this time, no changes should be made in how you advise patients with

confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections to treat fever and myalgias. The usual considerations should be made for co-morbidities and safety profiles when deciding between ibuprofen/NSAIDs and acetaminophen.

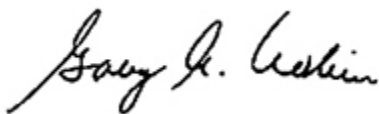
For additional information about treatment options, as well as supporting evidence for the recommendations provided below, please refer to the following documents located on the [COVID-19 Clinical Guidelines page on Physician Forum](#):

- [General Prescribing Recommendations During COVID-19](#)
- [Ambulatory Medication Update Patient FAQs](#)
- [Ambulatory Medication Update Physician FAQs](#)
- [NM ASP Evidence Review for Inpatient Treatment of COVID-19](#)

These documents are also available on the [NMI COVID-19 Clinical Guidelines page](#).

Additional resources also can be found on the COVID-19 pages on [NMI](#) and [Physician Forum](#). Remember, these resources are updated regularly, so please bookmark these pages and visit them frequently.

Thank you for your dedication to providing care to our patients and supporting each other during this challenging period. As we evolve our response to this rapidly changing crisis, we will continue to provide these daily COVID-19 Clinical Updates, as well as monitor your questions submitted to COVID-19MD@nm.org to help inform future communications.



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