

South Africa joins Covid-19 treatment study

South Africa will participate in the Public Health Emergency Solidarity Trial, which has been initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to come up with effective Covid-19 treatment protocols.



“WHO has convened an independent group of experts to review evidence from laboratory, animal and clinical studies to prioritise treatments for inclusion in the trial,” Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize says.

The group has identified the following treatment options for inclusion in the trial:

- Remdesivir: a drug which was previous used in an Ebola trial;
- Lopinavir/ritonavir: a licensed treatment for HIV and Aids;
- Lopinavir/ritonavir with interferon beta-1a: used for multiple sclerosis, and
- Chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine: drugs used to treat malaria and rheumatology conditions respectively.

All participating countries will adhere to the same methodology in order to facilitate the worldwide comparison of unproven treatments.

South Africa's research team is led by professors Helen Rees and Jeremy Nel, 30 senior working academics, researchers and clinicians from eight medical schools in the country, namely Wits University, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, Nelson Mandela University, University

of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Free State, and the SA Military Health Service.

“Other countries that have already confirmed their participation in the trial are Argentina, Bahrain, Canada, France, Iran, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand,” the minister said.

The research team will undertake the study in 14 leading hospitals across the country.

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