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For immediate release

MEDIA RELEASE

Anti-malarial medication tested for flu prevention in clinical study

Results of the CHloroquine for Influenza prevention (CHIP) trial released

Chloroquine does not stop the flu.

In a wide-ranging trial that was conducted using online tools, investigators here proved that the drug— widely used to combat malaria – does not work to prevent the flu.

The results of the CHloroquine for Influenza prevention (CHIP) trial were published by the medical journal, *Lancet Infectious Diseases* on 6 May 2011. The paper reported that while chloroquine was safe for consumption, it did not decrease the risk of contracting influenza. . Tests done in Singapore and elsewhere earlier had shown that chloroquine was able to stop the flu and other viral infections in laboratory tests

The CHIP trial was a collaboration between NUHS, Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI) and Duke-NUS. It involved clinical and scientific investigators from the three clinical research institutions.

More than 1500 healthy volunteers were randomly assigned to take either chloroquine or placebo pills for 12 weeks. The participants had to complete an online symptom diary once a week (or more frequently if they had symptoms) and received reminders by weekly email and SMS texts. Participants also had nasal swabs taken when they experienced flu-like symptoms and they also returned at the end of the 12-week period for blood tests to check if they had contracted the flu during the study period.

The CHIP trial was highly successful and innovative in its approach of patient recruitment and reporting methods. The trial was set up rapidly in the midst of an outbreak with large number of participants being recruited and screened online over a short period of time using a novel web-based portal designed by the study team. Patient reporting was facilitated through new channels of social media and electronic networking. In addition, the participants showed very high level of adherence to the study medication, the completion of the online diaries and the follow-up outpatient visits. All these indicate that the trial was conducted to a very high standard.

"Electronic web-based clinical trial systems are borderless, and can bring overseas patients to Singapore for clinical trials which increase our hinterland tremendously, giving Singapore an edge in clinical trials", said Dr Gerard Wong, Deputy Director of the Investigational Medical Unit at the National University Health System, where the trial was conducted.

This was one of only a very few trials worldwide that succeeded in setting up a complex study with speed in the face of a pandemic. It was also the only trial that tested a medication while other trials tested vaccines.

Singapore led the world with the CHIP trial and has generated international interest. Its successful completion is an important milestone in demonstrating that Singapore has the infrastructure to evaluate potential antivirals in an epidemic setting in an efficient, cost effective way with rapid responses.

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The National University Health System (NUHS)

The National University Health System (NUHS) groups the National University Hospital (NUH), NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and NUS Faculty of Dentistry under a common governance structure to create synergies to advance health by integrating excellent clinical care, research and education.

The enhanced capabilities and capacity will enable the NUHS to deliver better patient care, train future generations of doctors more effectively and bring innovative treatments to patients through groundbreaking research.

For more information about NUHS, please visit www.nuhs.edu.sg

Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI)

Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI) is an Academic Research Organisation dedicated to enhance the standards of human clinical research. Its vision is to develop SCRI and Singapore Scientists as an ASEAN hub for clinical research excellence.

SCRI strives to improve patient care through the design and conduct of high-quality, cutting-edge clinical studies. SCRI supports academic, public-sector and industry-sponsored studies ranging from proof-of-concept to late-phase clinical trials and epidemiological studies. In driving towards its vision, SCRI collaborates with clinicians to enhance Singapore's clinical research capabilities and strengthen its expertise in executing multi-site, multi-national research and the development of regional clinical research networks.

For more information on SCRI, please visit www.scri.edu.sg