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Worm drug next Covid craze?

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A Sydney academic who specialises in repurposing drugs says a cocktail based on the common worming treatment ivermectin, combined with zinc and a common antibiotic, should be deployed immediately in Victoria to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Having already developed "the world's first cure for peptic ulcers", Professor Thomas Borody says the "off the shelf" combination of ivermectin, zinc and doxycycline "could be the answer to Australia's COVID-19 crisis".

From The Centre for Digestive Disease, Professor Borody says some medical professionals are already using the combination as a Covid preventative.

"If nothing else, make it available in aged care homes immediately," he said. "Our elderly are at the highest risk and this is a very safe option, especially when we have nothing else except ventilators."

He says frontline workers "deserve more protection with a preventative medication like this, and as emergency treatment if they test positive".

"An ivermectin tablet can cost as little as \$2 - which could make it by far the cheapest, safest, and fastest cure for Australians and the Australian economy."

A Monash University-led study has also shown ivermectin could stop SARS-CoV-2 virus growing in cell culture.

"We found that even a single dose could essentially remove all viral RNA (effectively removed all genetic material of the virus) by 48 hours and that even at 24 hours there was a really significant reduction in it," Monash Biomedicine Discovery Institute's Dr Kylie Wagstaff said.

Several other studies have also reported on the antiviral effects of ivermectin on RNA viruses such as Zika, dengue, HIV, Avian influenza A, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome, as well as SARS-CoV-2.



Professor Borody says the triple therapy could be the fastest and safest way to stop the Victorian outbreak within 6 to 8 weeks, and distribution teams could be deployed in Victoria's hotspots to treat proven infected patients immediately.

"When state and federal governments are saying they will do whatever it takes, then I believe this is a potential life-saver right now," he said.

"Patient treatment programs have been done in the US and elsewhere which indicate it can work within four to six days."

Listed on the PBS, ivermectin is branded as MSD's anti-parasitic Stromectol. Almost 11,000 scripts were made out in 2019-20, earning the company \$336,000.

Megan Brodie

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