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New Mexico Medical Board Guidance on the Use of Off-Label Treatments for COVID-19 with Particular Reference to the Use of Ivermectin

It has come to the board's attention that ivermectin, an FDA-approved antiparasite drug is being recommended and/or prescribed by board licensees for the treatment of COVID-19.

Per the FDA:

“Good medical practice and the best interests of the patient require that physicians use legally available drugs, biologics and devices according to their best knowledge and judgement. If physicians use a product for an indication not in the approved labeling, they have the responsibility to be well informed about the product, to base its use on firm scientific rationale and on sound medical evidence, and to maintain records of the product's use and effects.” ( <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/label-and-investigational-use-marketed-drugs-biologics-and-medical-devices> )

The FDA is currently recommending against the use of this drug to treat COVID-19 ( see <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/why-you-should-not-use-ivermectin-treat-or-prevent-covid-19> ). While being studied, this drug has not been adequately evaluated for effectiveness, proper dosing, and safety. Serious adverse effects can occur, and nationally poison control centers are seeing a spike in calls around this drug.

A reputable research organization, The Cochrane Review, found as of July 2021 that:

“Based on the current very low- to low-certainty evidence, we are uncertain about the efficacy and safety of ivermectin used to treat or prevent COVID-19. The completed studies are small and few are considered high quality. Several studies are underway that may produce clearer answers in review updates. Overall, the reliable evidence available does not support the use of ivermectin for treatment or prevention of COVID-19 outside of well-designed randomized trials.”

(<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD015017.pub2/full> )

NIH COVID-19 treatment recommendations on ivermectin from February 2021 state:

“There is insufficient evidence for the COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines Panel (the Panel) to recommend either for or against the use of ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19. Results from adequately powered, well-designed, and well-conducted clinical trials are needed to provide more specific, evidence-based guidance on the role of ivermectin in the treatment of COVID-19.”

(<https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/therapies/antiviral-therapy/ivermectin/> )

This site also includes an extensive summary of trials of this drug, showing no, little or poor evidence of its effectiveness

(<https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/tables/table-2c/> )

While this guidance is not a thorough review of this drug nor does it make clinical recommendations that should remain between a licensed medical provider and their patient, it is meant to put on notice that any physician or PA who practices in a manner that can harm their patient, including recommending and providing treatment without adequate clinical justification, will be subject to board investigation and possible discipline.