

## COVID-19 and Hydroxychloroquine for Ophthalmologists

### Ophthalmic Examination Is a Procedure that Requires Close Contact with Patients with COVID-19.

In its guidance statement "Evaluation of Healthcare Workers with Patient Contact" issued on March 25, 2020, the Ministry of Health defined ophthalmic examination as a procedure requiring close contact. In the event of high-risk contact with COVID-19 patients without the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis for 3 days and a PCR test after 5 days of home isolation are recommended (1).



\* Toplam 3 gün, ilk gün 2x400 mg, 2.ve 3. günler 2x200 mg.

Healthcare Workers with Patient Contact

High-Risk Contact

Moderate-Risk Contact

Low-Risk Contact

Work with a medical mask / PCR test 5 days later

Work with a medical mask / Monitor for symptoms

Begin hydroxychloroquine\* / Followed for 5 days at home / PCR test 5 days later

Test Negative

Test Positive

Symptoms Negative

Symptoms Positive

Managed as confirmed case

Follow-up discontinued after 14 days

Managed as suspected case

\*Total 3 days, 400 mg twice on day 1, 200 mg twice on days 2 and 3.

### **Can we take hydroxychloroquine and continue performing eye exams?**

Physicians are posting on social media that a single dose of hydroxychloroquine provides protection for 21 days. Can we take hydroxychloroquine and continue performing eye exams? The Turkish Association for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases issued a statement saying "as experts in this area, we believe, based on available data, that these agents should only be used by selected symptomatic COVID-19 patients, preferably initiated in the early stage, and that they should not be used as prophylaxis" (2).

The Ministry of Health treatment guidelines (March 25, 2020) include a statement that "there are no clinical data yet indicating that hydroxychloroquine is effective as prophylaxis against COVID-19. Therefore, the use of hydroxychloroquine for prophylaxis before contact was not deemed appropriate or rational based on available information." (3) In this case, taking a single dose of chloroquine for 3 weeks of protection and continuing to perform ophthalmic examinations would be a risky approach.

Moreover, all hydroxychloroquine preparations in Turkey have been pulled from the market by the Turkish Ministry of Health and are now sold only with a red (controlled substances) prescription. The drug cannot be found in pharmacies.