

As relayed in the media, Hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil, Quensyl, Quinoric, ...) is being investigated as a potential treatment for COVID-19 related pneumonia. We all hope that it will help improve the outcomes of those affected by the disease. Unfortunately, in some countries, this has resulted in stock-piling, and the unplanned increase in demand has created shortages, causing anxiety amongst lupus patients that rely on Hydroxychloroquine as base treatment.

Lupus Europe and several national members have raised the issues with National Health Authorities and manufacturers. They are now well aware of the problem and are actively working on solutions. Production is beefed up, manufacturers are working with National Regulatory agencies and Pharmacy associations to help the distribution process and avoid shortages. In some countries, a special process has already been implemented in case a pharmacy can't find Hydroxychloroquine with their wholesaler for on-label (lupus, ...) use. Others will follow.

As a lupus patient, here is what you can do if you face Unavailability of hydroxychloroquine:

1. If you anticipate the need for Hydroxychloroquine soon, talk to your pharmacy to pre-order, and clearly mention that this is as treatment for your lupus. Do not ask for more than you need (i.e. 1 box).
2. Ask your doctor to mention on the prescription that this is for your lupus. In some countries, this will help prioritize supply.
3. If you do not have Hydroxychloroquine anymore, and can't obtain it at pharmacy:
 - Ask your pharmacy to get in contact with the local provider office ("Marketing authorization holder") on a possible emergency procedure for on-label usage
 - Get in contact with your rheumatologist and ask for guidance. In some countries, your doctor might also be able, if necessary, to meet your needs via hospital controlled supply.
 - Don't Panic! While Hydroxychloroquine is an essential part of your treatment, if you have regularly taken it over the past weeks, it will keep its protective effect for an extended period, even if you cannot take it during a limited period.
 - Strictly follow your Rheumatologist's guidance, both in the period where you might not have access to Hydroxychloroquine, and when you receive your next box.
4. Do NOT self-adjust any of your medication: Do not stop Cortisone, nor immune-suppressant, nor Hydroxychloroquine treatments, unless you get instructed to do so by your doctor.

Take care of yourself, and of those close to you – we will all get through this together!

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