



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	22 July 2020		
To:	Minister ZL Mkhize, Honorable Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

USE OF FAVIPIRAVIR IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

Problem Statement

- The MAC on Covid-19 received a request on whether favipiravir should be recommended in the management of Covid-19.

Review

- The National Essential Medicines List Committee (NEMLC) Covid-19 sub-group prepared a rapid review on the use of favipiravir for the prevention and management of Covid-19 (25 June 2020), *see rapid review document*.
- This rapid review found 3 trials from China evaluating favipiravir therapy in adult Covid-19 patients.^{1,2,3}
- These trials were unable to demonstrate that favipiravir had any effect on critical outcomes for decision-making (e.g. mortality or decreased need for mechanical ventilation).
- The use of favipiravir did not show better conversion to SARS-CoV-2 negative serostatus or clinical benefit (certainty of available evidence was low).
- The rapid review final recommendation indicated that favipiravir should only be used for the treatment of COVID-19 in the context of an approved clinical trial.
- Rapid reviews are dynamic and updated as new evidence becomes available.

¹ Lou Y., Liu L., Qiu Y. Clinical Outcomes and Plasma Concentrations of Baloxavir Marboxil and Favipiravir in COVID-19 Patients: an Exploratory Randomized, Controlled Trial. medRxiv 2020.04.29.20085761 (2020) doi:10.1101/2020.04.29.20085761.

² Chen, C. Zhang Y, Huang Y et al. Favipiravir versus Arbidol for COVID-19: A Randomized Clinical Trial. medRxiv 2020.03.17.20037432 (2020) doi:10.1101/2020.03.17.20037432.

³ Cai Q, Yang M, Liu D, et al. Experimental Treatment with Favipiravir for COVID-19: An Open-Label Control Study [published online ahead of print, 2020 Mar 18]. Engineering (Beijing). 2020;10.1016/j.eng.2020.03.007. doi:10.1016/j.eng.2020.03.007 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32346491/>

Recommendations

The MAC on Covid-19 supports the recommendation made by the NEMLC Covid-19 sub-committee, recommending that favipiravir should not be recommended for the treatment of Covid-19.

Favipiravir should only be used in the management of Covid-19 in the context of an approved clinical trial.

Kind regards,



PROFESSOR SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM

OVERARCHING CHAIRPERSON: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 22 July 2020

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General: National Health Insurance)**
- » **Dr S Zungu (Project Lead: Sectoral Response to Covid-19)**
- » **Incident Management Team**