

## Hydroxychloroquine concentrations persist after drug discontinuation

Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) blood concentrations may persist for approximately two weeks after drug discontinuation, along with associated QT-interval prolongation. These were findings of an Italian study published in *Drugs in R&D*.

Data from medical records for 91 patients admitted to Fondazione IRCCS Policlinico San Matteo for the management of COVID-19 infection, and who received HCQ for four or more days (mean 10 days), were used to investigate HCQ blood concentrations and heart-rate corrected QT (QTc)-interval during admission (11 HCQ observations) and at follow-up visits (83).

The upper 95% CI of the prediction of the regression model crossed the line of the 500 ng/mL concentration at day 16 after cessation of HCQ treatment.

The median QTc interval was 423.62 msec. QTc interval measurements were significantly correlated with HCQ concentrations in a model that included age, sex and use of other QT-prolonging drugs used for COVID-19 treatment (azithromycin, levofloxacin, and lopinavir/ritonavir;  $p=0.01$ ).

"Our study suggests that HCQ whole blood concentration could persist above 500 ng/mL up to 16 days after short-term treatment discontinuation and that HCQ concentration significantly correlates with corrected QT interval prolongation also in short-term treatment courses," said the authors. "We suggest to start (or re-introduce) QT-prolonging drugs 16 days after HCQ short-therapy discontinuation," they added.

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