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Trial Drug could help protect kidney patients from virus

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ACLINICAL trial is to launch in Bristol to see whether the use of drugs used to treat tapeworm can help prevent Covid in kidney patients..



The trial, which began at Addenbroke's Hospital in Cambridge in February, is rolling out to hospitals across the UK, including those run by North Bristol NHS Trust.

The trial, run in partnership with Kidney Research UK, has been assessing whether kidney patients can benefit from additional protection from Covid-19, using a drug routinely used to treat tapeworm.

It has been investigating if the drug niclosamide can prevent Covid-19 infection in vulnerable kidney patients and reduce the number of people who become seriously ill or die.

If the charity and industry-funded trial is successful, it may pave the way for a new treatment to prevent or alleviate the impact of Covid-19 in people on dialysis, people who have had a kidney transplant, and people with auto-immune diseases affecting the kidneys such as vasculitis, who require treatment to suppress their immune system.

The treatment will last up to nine months.

Professor Jeremy Hughes, kidney doctor and chair of trustees at Kidney Research UK, said: "We must do everything we can to protect kidney patients who are at serious risk from Covid-19.

"Sadly, data collected before the vaccine rollout began showed one in five kidney patients receiving dialysis in hospital or who have a kidney transplant and tested positive for the virus died within four weeks."

In the UK alone, around 64,000 people receive dialysis treatment or have had a kidney transplant.

"Kidney patients should have the vaccine, as soon as they are offered it. We hope this trial will add an extra layer of protection for kidney patients in the future.

"It could even reveal a way to prevent Covid-19 in other vulnerable people," added Professor Hughes.

Participants can receive the vaccine and still take part in this trial, which will identify whether niclosamide can protect people from the virus either on its own, or in combination with any of the vaccines currently available.

Niclosamide has been re-formulated into a nasal spray so it can be delivered directly to the lining of the nasal cavity, like a hayfever spray.

In the trial, people will take one puff up each nostril twice a day, as this is the part of the body where the virus can take hold.

This “local” drug delivery is likely to reduce the chances of people experiencing any side effects.

Early tests revealed niclosamide could stop SARS-CoV-2 multiplying and entering cells of the upper airways.

Dr Fergus Caskey, a renal consultant at North Bristol NHS Trust, said: “We are delighted to be part of this important trial. It is vital we find a way to protect high-risk kidney patients from catching SARS-CoV-2 and developing Covid-19.

“If they get it, they are more likely to fall seriously ill or die, and we need to find a way to change that.

“We believe testing niclosamide is particularly important for people who are immunosuppressed and have kidney disease, because their immune responses to vaccines can sometimes be less effective, indeed there are early indications that not all transplant patients respond to two doses of some Covid vaccines.

“While the vaccine may offer a level of protection, niclosamide may provide further protection against Covid19 that doesn’t rely on the immune system mounting a response.”