

President Trump on Monday revealed he's taking hydroxychloroquine, a controversial drug that he's championed as a potential treatment for coronavirus despite limited evidence from the medical community.

The president said he consulted with the White House doctor about taking the drug, but it was not explicitly recommended for him since he has not tested positive for the virus.

"I asked him what do you think," Trump said. "He said, 'Well if you'd like it.' I said, 'Yeah, I'd like it. I'd like to take it.' "

He said he's been taking the drug for about a week-and-a-half along with a zinc supplement, adding he based his decision on positive reviews he's heard from front-line health care workers who have had good results treating patients with it.

"Here's my evidence: I get a lot of positive calls about it," Trump said.

"So far, I seem to be OK," he added.

The president's decision to take hydroxychloroquine is controversial and potentially dangerous given that the drug's effectiveness in treating coronavirus remains unproven and there is no evidence that it works as a preventative measure. The pill is typically taken as an anti-malaria drug or to treat lupus.

The Food and Drug Administration issued a warning last month that hydroxychloroquine should not be taken outside a hospital or clinical trial because of the risk of severe heart problems.

The drug showed no benefit for patients in an analysis of those hospitalized in Veterans Health Administration medical centers. The study, released last month, found the two primary outcomes for COVID-19 patients treated with hydroxychloroquine were death and the need for mechanical ventilation.

Medical experts and media figures were quick to raise concerns about Trump's embrace of the drug, expressing alarm that it may encourage others to do the same despite potentially deadly side effects.

"If you are in a risky population here and you are taking this as a preventative treatment to ward off the virus ... and you are in this vulnerable population, it will kill you," said Fox News anchor Neil Cavuto.

Trump appeared to get a kick out of the media's reaction to his announcement on Monday, which came at a roundtable with restaurant industry executives.

"I was just waiting to see your eyes light up when I said this," he said.

The White House did not immediately reply to a request for further documentation to show that Trump is taking the drug, or at what dosage.

The president spent weeks in March and April touting hydroxychloroquine as a potential panacea to the coronavirus, despite limited evidence to suggest it was effective in a clinical setting.

Trump repeatedly argued that patients had “nothing to lose” by taking the drug and even suggested they take it proactively.

Fox News hosts and other conservative figures also pushed hydroxychloroquine as a potential treatment, and Laura Ingraham reportedly visited the White House at one point to pitch the president on the drug.

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The government eventually stockpiled 29 million pills to distribute to hospitals.

The president has sparked controversy by suggesting unconventional and in some cases dangerous methods to combatting the coronavirus, which has killed more than 90,000 people in the U.S. Trump in April suggested officials look into injecting disinfectants as a potential treatment, a comment he later claimed was sarcastic.

—Updated at 5:12 p.m.