The HERO-HCQ trial will test if hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) can prevent COVID-19 infection in at-risk healthcare workers.

**WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HCQ:**

- HCQ was first prescribed for the treatment of lupus in the 1950s.
- Today, it is used to prevent and treat uncomplicated malaria and treatment of lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.
- HCQ was prescribed over 5 million times in 2017.
- Existing safety data has mostly come from people treated for malaria and lupus.

**WHAT WE DON’T KNOW ABOUT HCQ:**

- In the laboratory HCQ has shown activity against the virus that causes COVID-19. We don’t yet know if this activity translates into benefit in humans.
- It is possible that the benefit of HCQ is in preventing or treating early disease. We need information on whether HCQ is safe and effective for prevention of COVID-19.
- Existing information has resulted from studies for treatment. The studies are of poor quality (low numbers of people with no control groups) with mixed results. Many of these treatment studies are looking only at the sickest patients.
Large, randomized controlled trials are the only way to find out if HCQ is effective in preventing COVID-19 in people who are at risk of exposure to the infection.

We currently have no vaccine or preventive therapy for COVID-19. We need to explore every option for prevention.

**WHAT ARE THE KNOWN SIDE EFFECTS?**
Observational studies suggest HCQ is generally safe and well-tolerated. The most common problems with HCQ are:
- Upset stomach – primarily with a high dose of the drug
- Skin rash
- Damage to the retina of the eyes if HCQ is taken for a long time

**DOES HCQ CAUSE ABNORMAL HEART RHYTHMS?**
- Abnormal heart rhythms are not common when non-hospitalized people use HCQ. In fact, millions of prescriptions are written annually for autoimmune conditions and heart problems are not a significant concern.
- The American College of Rheumatology does not recommend EKG testing prior to starting HCQ for outpatients with autoimmune conditions, so the HERO-HCQ trial will not require EKG testing.
- Recent studies have found that some patients with COVID-19 had heart rhythm disorders while taking HCQ, particularly when used with other medications that have the same effect.
- To ensure safety for participants, the HERO-HCQ trial won’t allow healthcare workers at risk of heart rhythm disorders to participate.

**IS THE HERO-HCQ TRIAL SAFE?**
- The HERO-HCQ trial is being conducted with FDA oversight.
- The HERO-HCQ protocol excludes any participant at high risk for side effects associated with HCQ, including those at high risk for certain heart conditions, severe skin reactions, retinopathy, severe heart disease, or who are taking medications that can interact with HCQ.
- The HERO-HCQ trial has a Data Safety and Monitoring Board that reviews study data regularly to identify common safety events and ensure that severe unexpected events are identified and reported to the FDA.
- There are at least 30 studies investigating HCQ for prevention or treatment of COVID-19. These studies are critical for us to understand if HCQ can be used as part of our clinical toolkit against COVID-19.