

Pepcid has no effect on the COVID-19 virus

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- After months of unresolved debate around Pepcid and its effect on the COVID-19 virus, drug development scientists from a small biotech start-up based in Boston have shown that the active ingredient in Pepcid is unable prevent the virus from multiplying.

The new [study published on bioRxiv.org on July 15th](#) is not yet peer reviewed but evaluates famotidine, the active ingredient in the heart burn drug Pepcid.

The drug snatched news headlines when a [US physician returning from Wuhan](#), reported that COVID-19 patients in China taking the heartburn drug fared better than others. With

support from physicians at Northwell Health in New York and a \$20.7 million contract from the U.S. Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), the group launched a clinical trial testing high doses of famotidine in COVID-19 patients. The expectation was that the heartburn drug could block the virus from replicating. The Northwell and associated clinical researchers then utilized computational modeling and predicted two viral proteins as the target of famotidine action. Their collective work was published in the Gastroenterology journal in May of 2020 (doi: <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.gastro.2020.05.053>).

This news led to [panic buying of the heartburn drug](#), leading to drug shortages at pharmacies across the country. It is then that scientists at Bisect Therapeutics, Inc sprung in to action to understand how this popular, over-the-counter heartburn drug could block the virus.

“In a race to quickly identify cures, researchers have rushed to test anything that has shown anecdotal effect in COVID-19” said Dr. Ali H. Munawar, the lead author of the study and CEO of Bisect Therapeutics. “Without understanding the mechanism of action of a drug, we are unlikely



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Famotidine, the active ingredient in Pepcid does not prevent coronavirus infections , new findings show.

to test it in the appropriate clinical trials or worse, end up harming patients” he said. “It is important to understand how a drug works to minimize side effects and maximize benefits in the correct patient population”.

The Bisect scientists showed that famotidine has no effect on the function of either of the two viral proteins, in fact it does not physically interact with them. Furthermore, in collaboration with scientists at Boston University, they showed that famotidine is unable to block virus replication in cultured human lung cells even when tested at exceedingly high doses.

While the antiviral effect of famotidine is not substantiated, there may be other ways in which the drug is helping patients asserts Dr. Munawar. “The retrospective clinical study by the Northwell researchers (Gastroenterology does show that famotidine use is associated with some benefit, how it does so and to what extent is something we will have to understand better. However, we can say with reasonable certainty that this drug is unlikely to prevent coronavirus infection”.

Bisect Therapeutics, Inc. is a patient-focused drug development company with a mission to develop antiviral treatments for COVID-19 and other life threatening viral infections.

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