

Taiwan objects triple antiviral drug therapy for COVID-19

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A recent study by Hong Kong researchers claimed that patients suffering milder symptoms of COVID-19 can be treated by a three-drug antiviral cocktail which Taiwan CECC doesn't recommend



Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) chief advisor Chang Shan-chwen recently mentioned that a triple antiviral therapy that has shown promise in treating patients with mild symptoms of COVID-19 in Hong Kong is not being recommended in Taiwan because it can produce side effects.

Researchers in Hong Kong have found that patients suffering milder illnesses caused by the new coronavirus recover more quickly if they are treated with a three-drug antiviral cocktail soon after symptoms appear.

According to the Hong Kong study published in *The Lancet* Friday, early treatment with the triple combination of antiviral therapy -- using interferon beta-1b with lopinavir-ritonavir and ribavirin -- helps to rapidly suppress the amount of virus in a patient's body and alleviate symptoms.

Mr Chang, the CECC's expert advisory panel convener, said the panel had considered including the use of the multiple sclerosis treatment interferon beta-1b with the hepatitis drug ribavirin in its treatment guidelines for COVID-19 but dropped the idea because past clinical figures show that the treatment causes side effects in quite a high percentage of patients. He added that the *Lancet* study indicated the main negative side effects of the medications are nausea, diarrhoea, fever and raised alanine transaminase level.

As for the antiraised alanine transaminase level-HIV therapy lopinavir-ritonavir, Chang said that although it causes fewer side effects and was included in the first treatment guidelines, use of the therapy alone is not effective in treatment of COVID-19 patients.