

Statement from Amarylis Gutierrez, senior vice president and chief pharmacy officer, Kaiser Permanente

Currently, there is a global shortage of the medications hydroxychloroquine (and the brand name version, Plaquenil) and chloroquine after these drugs were identified as being potential therapies for some severely sick COVID-19 patients who are hospitalized. On March 31, the FDA officially placed hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine on the FDA Drug Shortages list. Several states – including at least New York, Nevada, Idaho, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Texas – have issued emergency restrictions on dispensing these medications, due to what is hopefully a temporary shortage.

In the face of this worldwide shortage, Kaiser Permanente has taken action to ensure we have adequate supply to meet the needs of our patients who need these medications, and also ensure access for severely sick patients hospitalized with COVID-19 infections. It is important to note that all of the medications prescribed for COVID-19 are investigational and Kaiser Permanente is committed to participating in clinical trials to determine if any of the potential options prove to be beneficial.

Our patients who have been prescribed these medications for non-COVID-19 treatments are talking with their physicians to ensure the appropriate continued use of these medications, or considering alternatives when clinically appropriate. Our actions have been successful so far, and we have enough medication in the very near term to meet our patients' needs. Our approach to ensuring our patients have access to these scarce medicines fully complies with California Board of Pharmacy regulations.

We and other health care organizations across the country are working with manufacturers and other sources of these drugs to obtain increased supplies to meet the expected needs to come. If we don't take steps to mitigate the shortage, we all will face the real possibility of running out of these critical drugs.