

Op-Ed | "Look at this Drug"

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Dexamethasone's success as the world's first coronavirus treatment (**Small but vital first step in battle against virus, Jun 18**) indicates that we should look to our national pharmacy cupboards for other generic drugs with potential to reduce the impact of Covid-19. Metformin, a low-cost generic drug currently used by more than 100 million diabetic patients around the world, deserves a consideration.

Early data from Wuhan is encouraging—the mortality of elderly patients on metformin was 25% that of the mortality of patients not on metformin. The American Federation for Aging Research and partners are in the process of launching multi-year trial to test metformin's ability to influence immune response. However, given the urgency of the current crisis, we recommend that governments expedite research into the use of metformin to improve the immune resilience of older people, a cohort which has been disproportionately hit by the virus. If it allows even a small percentage of them to avoid death and hospitalisation, the efforts will be worth it.

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