

Those Published “17,000 Hydroxychloroquine Deaths” Never Happened

Brownstone Institute

8–10 minutes

An article titled ‘Deaths induced by compassionate use of hydroxychloroquine during the first COVID-19 wave: An estimate’ appeared in Elsevier’s *Journal of Biomedicine and Pharmacotherapy*, has been retracted. The article that estimated that 17,000 people “could” have died was retracted, but only after the mainstream media shouted the false information. It was retracted because the Belgian dataset was “fraudulent” and the article referenced the *New England Journal of Medicine*’s 2020 RECOVERY trial that was a deeply flawed study that implemented treatment in the severely ill and gave patients extremely high doses of HCQ. The drug is still used in prescription drugs for malaria and COVID, it is used for long-term chronic disease, and can also be found in small amounts in tonic water.

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Early January of 2024, Americans learned about the publication of an article from Elsevier’s *Journal of [Biomedicine](#)*

[and Pharmacotherapy](#) overseen by [Dr. Danyelle Townsend](#), a professor at the [University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy's](#) Department of Drug Discovery and Biomedical Sciences. As Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Townsend reviewed, approved, and published the article titled: “[Deaths induced by compassionate use of hydroxychloroquine during the first COVID-19 wave: An estimate.](#)”

The article was always a hypothesized estimate of people that *might have* died, but now even that *estimate* has been [retracted](#). The reason for the retraction was that the Belgian dataset that was one of the bases for the piece was found to be “[unreliable](#)” (but in reality was [fraudulent](#)). The article also [repeatedly](#) referenced the *New England Journal of Medicine's* 2020 [RECOVERY trial](#). The RECOVERY trial is well known to be a [deeply flawed study](#) which, in addition to implementing [late treatment in severely ill](#) Covid patients, used [extremely high doses of HCQ](#).

The now retracted publication authors were all French or Canadian, with the primary author a pharmacist by the name of [Alexiane Pradelle](#). According to a rudimentary internet search, Dr. Pradelle had never published before.

Subsequently, listed authors were degreed as physicians, pharmacists, and/or professors of their respective disciplines. The main, corresponding author, [Jean-Christophe Lega](#), runs the Evaluation and Modeling of Therapeutic Effects team at the University of Lyon.

Hydroxychloroquine's Fabled Safety History Contrasts Data

In addition to being a hypothesized estimate, the article also attacked the legendary safety of HCQ, contradicting centuries of the safety of [quinolines](#) as a class.

HCQ, chloroquine and quinine are structurally and pharmaceutically/mechanistically related, sharing the same [quinoline structural group](#). The original iteration of quinine was a very fortunate discovery that dates back to the 1600s (at least) as a medicinal tippie used by [Jesuit missionaries in South America](#). It is naturally found in the bark of the [Cinchona tree](#) (also called a “Quina-Quina” tree).

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Quinine is still available today both [as a prescription drug](#), for similar indications as HCQ including malaria...**and as a [Covid-19](#) treatment.**

Quinine is so safe that it may be unique in that the FDA simultaneously permits its use without a prescription, as an ingredient in [tonic waters](#).

HCQ is similarly safe when used appropriately and under medical supervision.

The CDC describes HCQ as “[a relatively well tolerated medicine](#)” and that “[HCQ can be prescribed to adults and children of all ages. It can also be safely taken by pregnant women and nursing mothers](#)” referring to its *long-term* use in chronic diseases.

Basic logic dictates that, if a drug is safe for *long-term* use, it would also be safe for *short-term* use, *including* (and

especially) in [Covid-19 early treatment](#)/pre-exposure prophylaxis type indications.

These are pharmacology fundamentals that ought to be known by *any* pharmacist or physician – *let alone* to a professor serving as a Journal Editor-in-Chief at a taxpayer-funded state [College of Pharmacy](#).

Did not even one person on her [editorial board of over 50 “peer-reviewers” and staff](#) ponder the celebrated and storied history of HCQ (and its predecessors) and how incongruent this study’s findings were before choosing to publish data denigrating HCQ safety?

The correct answer to that might actually be: “no”...

The publishing [editorial board](#) all seem to be laboratory bench (non-clinical) research scientists, per their biographies.

Although the board does promote itself as meeting DEI requirements of being “[gender diverse](#),” a more important question might be is if they have the appropriate credentials and experience to review and opine on clinically complex drug safety/epidemiology subject matters in the first place.

Is just anyone now allowed to opine on specialty clinical pharmacology drug safety matters?

In certain journals/news publications, the answer to that question seems to be: “yes”...

Those “17,000 Deaths” Never Occurred

Another point of confusion surrounded the interpretation and promotion of this little-known publication by the lay press.

To be exact: there were *never* “17,000 deaths;” it was always a hypothetical extrapolation of people that *could have* died, based on “unreliable” (eg, [actually, fraudulent](#)) databases on top of the previously mentioned, problematic late-stage RECOVERY-trial-type dosing and timing.

Still, Josh Cohen, a *Forbes.com* PhD senior healthcare columnist, used this publication to headline an absurdly biased op-ed against HCQ, stating that Trump’s HCQ proposal was “[Linked To 17,000 Deaths](#).” *Forbes’* Tufts, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania- trained “[healthcare analyst](#)” misrepresented or appeared to not understand the now-retracted study methodology or projections.

It went downhill from there. Mere hours following the publication, very similar, now objectively inaccurate, highly politicized, and seemingly coordinated attacks on HCQ and Trump were published by: [The Hill](#), [Politico](#), [Frontline News](#), [Scripps News](#), [the Guardian](#), [KFF Health News](#), [News Nation](#), [Newsweek](#), [AOL.com](#), [Yahoo News](#), and [Daily Kos](#), in addition to a [multitude](#) of prominent [regional](#), [international](#), and US [federal](#) news [outlets](#), many falsely estimating that 17,000 deaths had already taken place and that the (imaginary) victims’ blood was already on Donald Trump’s hands.

As of September 15, 2024, the above and other articles still show up very prominently (on the first page) of a [Google search](#) for “*hydroxychloroquine deaths*”...which **never happened**.

Here are some screenshots of headlines referencing non-

existent deaths based on a now-retracted study:

[Read original article here...](#)

- [Covid](#)
- [HCQ](#)
- [Hydroxychloroquine](#)



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Other

[Biden Admin Defies Subpoenas Regarding Executive Order to 'Promote Voter Registration'](#)

The Biden administration has met with left-wing activist groups, including George Soros's Open Society Foundation. A US Marshall whistleblower has revealed that some agencies have even sent out voter registration guidelines to noncitizens, including illegal aliens in US prisons.



War

[As War Against Russia Escalates, Russia Warns Americans They Can't Hide from Nuclear War](#)

Ukraine may use long-range missiles that are produced in the US to strike deep into Russian territory. A Russian ambassador warned that if there is a conflict, it will spread to the US and added, "the Americans will not be able to sit it out behind the waters of the ocean, this war will affect everyone."



Other

[Florida: Man Arrested in Second Assassination Attempt on Former President Trump](#)

The suspect, Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, was reported to have been spotted by Secret Service agents near the Trump's West Palm Beach golf club with a Soviet-style SKS assault rifle. The agents opened fire on him, but he fled and was later arrested by local police. Routh has a lengthy criminal record from North Carolina.

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