

CORONAVIRUS

Nursing home resident denied COVID-19 treatment

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Exclusive: Doctors are refusing to give a 94-year-old nursing home resident an experimental treatment that could help her fight deadly COVID-19.

Katharina Lica's desperate family gave their consent to the home in Melbourne immediately upon learning of her diagnosis — knowing there is a limited window for action — but have hit brick walls.

Daughter Monika Kloszynski said she feared she would never get to see her mother again if she was not given the treatment, which combines three cheap drugs that are already on the market in Australia and safe for use in humans.


International data has reported an almost 100 per cent cure rate.

“The doctors will not listen, I think we really don't have anything to lose to try this drug. And, you know, I'm willing to do anything to help mum, but the doctors won't budge on it,” Mrs Kloszynski told News Corp.

At least one patient at the nursing home, which News Corp has chosen not to name, has died from COVID-19 and many more are battling the virus.

Mrs Kloszynski has power of attorney and was prepared to sign a waiver if doctors wished her to take full responsibility for giving her mother the treatment.



 Monika Kloszynski with husband George, at home in Melbourne. Monika's mother, Katharina Lica was diagnosed with COVID-19 and her family want her to try an experimental head lice treatment. Picture: Alex Coppel.

The treatment in question is being trialled in America by Sydney doctor Professor Thomas Borody, who runs the Centre for Digestive Diseases and helped discover the cure for peptic ulcers.

The treatment combines ivermectin — a tablet that is used to treat parasites including head lice — with zinc and a cheap antibiotic doxycycline.

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Professor Borody said the triple therapy had been trialled in 60 patients in Bangladesh and all 60 patients were cured.

And a blinded trial of the treatment in China also showed 100 per cent of patients were cured.

Once a patient becomes sick enough to need hospitalisation, the medication may not work — it is only effective in the lead up.

“International data reports almost 100 per cent cure rate and a symptom improvement within 4-6 days. We should share Australian data from this triple therapy with the world,” he said.

He said GPs wishing to try the treatment can email him at GP@CDD.com.au to obtain the dosing protocol.



 Monika Kloszynski with her mother Katharina Lica. Picture : Courtesy of Monika Kloszynski

News Corp contacted the medical practice treating Mrs Lica and was told they could not prescribe the treatment for her because they have to work to Australian clinical guidelines.

The experimental treatment had not been approved for use, a spokeswoman said.

The spokeswoman said the family was welcome to seek a second medical opinion and Professor Borody could prescribe the drug for Mrs Lica if he wished.

However Sydney based Professor Borody said the GP manages the patient and does all follow-up care, and in this case they are in an aged care facility in Melbourne.

“It's just not ethically possible over such a distance with inability to quickly respond and manage any changing clinical situation in this 94 year old,” he said.

Australian Medical Association vice-president and head of the AMA's ethics committee Dr Chris Moy said: “A doctor is not ethically or legally bound to provide treatment that they genuinely did not think was of medical benefit.”

He refused to discuss the specific case but said in general it was possible for doctors to prescribe medical treatments off label.

“A doctor, in an end of life situation, and where all other evidence based options had been tried, could consider offering the option of an experimental or off label treatment that they think might be beneficial, but only after obtaining informed consent and having explained the risks and potential benefits,” he said.

Mrs Kloszynski said: “Right now, I feel I'm fighting for my mother but I'm fighting for all those people in nursing homes that have no control but can't do anything but what they've got dished out to them.”