

RANDOMISED EVALUATION OF COVID-19 THERAPY (RECOVERY)

Background: In early 2020, as this protocol was being developed, there were no approved treatments for COVID-19, a disease induced by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 that emerged in China in late 2019. The UK New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) advised that several possible treatments should be evaluated, including Lopinavir-Ritonavir, low-dose corticosteroids, and Hydroxychloroquine. These groups also advised that other treatments will soon emerge that require evaluation. A World Health Organization (WHO) expert group issued broadly similar advice.

Eligibility and randomisation: This protocol describes a randomised trial among adults hospitalised for COVID-19. All eligible patients are randomly allocated between several treatment arms, each to be given in addition to the usual standard of care in the participating hospital: No additional treatment vs Lopinavir-Ritonavir vs Low-dose Corticosteroids vs Hydroxychloroquine vs Azithromycin. The study allows a second randomisation for patients with progressive COVID-19 (evidence of hyper-inflammatory state): No additional treatment vs Tocilizumab. For patients for whom not all the trial arms are appropriate or at locations where not all are available, randomisation will be between fewer arms.

Adaptive design: The interim trial results will be monitored by an independent Data Monitoring Committee (DMC). The most important task for the DMC will be to assess whether the randomised comparisons in the study have provided evidence on mortality that is strong enough (with a range of uncertainty around the results that is narrow enough) to affect national and global treatment strategies. In such a circumstance, the DMC will inform the Trial Steering Committee who will make the results available to the public and amend the trial arms accordingly. New trial arms can be added as evidence emerges that other candidate therapeutics should be evaluated.

Outcomes: The main outcomes will be death, discharge, need for ventilation and need for renal replacement therapy. For the main analyses, follow-up will be censored at 28 days after randomisation. Additional information on longer term outcomes may be collected through review of medical records or linkage to medical databases such as those managed by NHS Digital and equivalent organisations in the devolved nations.

Simplicity of procedures: To facilitate collaboration, even in hospitals that suddenly become overloaded, patient enrolment (via the internet) and all other trial procedures are greatly streamlined. Informed consent is simple and data entry is minimal. Randomisation via the internet is simple and quick, at the end of which the allocated treatment is displayed on the screen and can be printed or downloaded. Follow-up information is recorded at a single timepoint and may be ascertained by contacting participants in person, by phone or electronically, or by review of medical records and databases.

Data to be recorded: At randomisation, information will be collected on the identity of the randomising clinician and of the patient, age, sex, major co-morbidity, pregnancy, COVID-19 onset date and severity, and any contraindications to the study treatments. The main outcomes will be death (with date and probable cause), discharge (with date), need for ventilation (with number of days recorded) and need for renal replacement therapy. Reminders will be sent if outcome data have not been recorded by 28 days after

randomisation. Suspected Unexpected Serious Adverse Reactions (SUSARs) to one of the study medication (eg, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, anaphylaxis, aplastic anaemia) will be collected and reported in an expedited fashion. Other adverse events will not be recorded but may be available through linkage to medical databases.

Numbers to be randomised: The larger the number randomised the more accurate the results will be, but the numbers that can be randomised will depend critically on how large the epidemic becomes. If substantial numbers are hospitalised in the participating centres then it may be possible to randomise several thousand with mild disease and a few thousand with severe disease, but realistic, appropriate sample sizes could not be estimated at the start of the trial.

Heterogeneity between populations: If sufficient numbers are studied, it may be possible to generate reliable evidence in certain patient groups (e.g. those with major co-morbidity or who are older). To this end, data from this study may be combined with data from other trials of treatments for COVID-19, such as those being planned by the WHO.

Add-on studies: Particular countries or groups of hospitals, may well want to collaborate in adding further measurements or observations, such as serial virology, serial blood gases or chemistry, serial lung imaging, or serial documentation of other aspects of disease status. While well-organised additional research studies of the natural history of the disease or of the effects of the trial treatments could well be valuable (although the lack of placebo control may bias the assessment of subjective side-effects, such as gastro-intestinal problems), they are not core requirements.

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1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1.1 Setting

In 2019 a novel coronavirus-induced disease (COVID-19) emerged in Wuhan, China. A month later the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention identified a new beta-coronavirus (SARS coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2) as the aetiological agent.¹ The clinical manifestations of COVID-19 range from asymptomatic infection or mild, transient symptoms to severe viral pneumonia with respiratory failure. As many patients do not progress to severe disease the overall case fatality rate per infected individual is low, but hospitals in areas with significant community transmission have experienced a major increase in the number of hospitalised pneumonia patients, and the frequency of severe disease in hospitalised patients can be as high as 30%.²⁻⁴ The progression from prodrome (usually fever, fatigue and cough) to severe pneumonia requiring oxygen support or mechanical ventilation often takes one to two weeks after the onset of symptoms.² The kinetics of viral replication in the respiratory tract are not well characterized, but this relatively slow progression provides a potential time window in which antiviral therapies could influence the course of disease.

1.2 Treatment Options

1.2.1 First (main) randomisation

There are currently no approved anti-viral or host-directed treatments for COVID-19. This protocol allows reliable assessment of the effects of multiple different treatments (including re-purposed and novel drugs) on major outcomes in COVID-19. All patients will receive usual care for the participating hospital.

Randomisation may be between the following treatment arms (although not all arms may be available at any one time):

No additional treatment: There are currently no approved anti-viral or host-directed treatments for COVID-19.

Lopinavir-Ritonavir: Lopinavir is a human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV-1) protease inhibitor, which is combined with ritonavir to increase lopinavir's plasma half-life. Lopinavir-Ritonavir has shown activity against SARS and MERS CoVs.

Low dose corticosteroids: Favourable immune response modulation by low-dose corticosteroids might help treat severe acute respiratory coronavirus infections, including COVID-19, SARS and MERS.

Hydroxychloroquine: Hydroxychloroquine, a derivative of chloroquine, has been used for many decades to treat malaria and rheumatological diseases. It has antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 in cell culture.

Azithromycin: Azithromycin is a macrolide antibiotic with immunomodulatory properties that has shown benefit in inflammatory lung disease.

Further details on each of these treatment options is provided in Appendix 1 (see section 9.1).

1.2.2 Second randomisation for patients with progressive COVID-19

Severe COVID-19 is associated with release of pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as IL-1, IL-6 and TNF α , and other markers of systemic inflammation including ferritin and C-reactive protein.^{3,5,6} There is a possibility that this response may cause or exacerbate lung injury, leading to life-threatening disease.

Participants with progressive COVID-19 (as evidenced by hypoxia and an inflammatory state) may undergo an optional second randomisation between the following treatment arms:

No additional treatment: There are currently no approved immunomodulatory or other host-directed treatments to prevent the progression of COVID-19.

Tocilizumab: Tocilizumab is an interleukin-6 (IL-6) receptor antibody which blocks a component of the immune response that may drive progression to ARDS.

Modifications to the number of treatment arms: Other arms can be added to the first or second randomisation if evidence emerges that there are suitable candidate therapeutics. Conversely, in some patient populations, not all trial arms are appropriate (e.g. due to contraindications based on co-morbid conditions or concomitant medication); in some hospitals, not all treatment arms will be available (e.g. due to manufacturing and supply shortages); and at some times, not all treatment arms will be active (e.g. due to lack of relevant approvals and contractual agreements). In any of these situations, randomisation will be between fewer arms.

1.3 Design Considerations

The RECOVERY Protocol describes an overarching trial design to provide reliable evidence on the efficacy of candidate therapies for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection in hospitalised adult patients receiving usual standard of care.

There are no known treatments for COVID-19. The anticipated scale of the epidemic is such that hospitals, and particularly intensive care facilities, may be massively overstretched. Under some models of pandemic spread, up to 50% of the adult population may fall sick over a period of 8-12 weeks, of whom around 10% may require hospitalisation. This would involve about 2 million hospital admissions. In this situation, even treatments with only a moderate impact on survival or on hospital resources could be worthwhile. Therefore, the focus of RECOVERY is the impact of candidate treatments on mortality and on the need for hospitalisation or ventilation.

Critically, the trial is designed to minimise the burden on front-line hospital staff working within an overstretched care system during a major epidemic. Eligibility criteria are therefore simple and trial processes (including paperwork) are minimised.

The protocol is deliberately flexible so that it is suitable for a wide range of settings, allowing:

- a broad range of patients to be enrolled in large numbers;
- randomisation between only those treatment arms that are *both* available at the hospital *and* not believed by the enrolling doctor to be contraindicated (e.g. by particular co-morbid conditions or concomitant medications);
- treatment arms to be added or removed according to the emerging evidence; and
- additional sub-studies may be added to provide more detailed information on side effects or sub-categorisation of patient types but these are not the primary objective and are not required for participation.

In a cohort of 191 hospitalised COVID-19 patients with a completed outcome, the median time from illness onset to discharge was 22.0 days (IQR 18.0–25.0) and the median time to death was 18.5 days (15.0–22.0). Thirty-two patients (17%) required invasive mechanical ventilation and the median time from onset to mechanical ventilation was 14.5 days. Therefore, early endpoint assessment, such as 28 days after the main randomisation, is likely to provide largely complete outcome data and will permit early assessment of treatment efficacy and safety.⁷

2 DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

2.1 Eligibility

Patients are eligible for the study if all of the following are true:

- (i) Aged at least 18 years
- (ii) Hospitalised
- (iii) SARS-CoV-2 infection (clinically suspected¹ or laboratory confirmed)
- (iv) No medical history that might, in the opinion of the attending clinician, put the patient at significant risk if he/she were to participate in the trial

In addition, if the attending clinician believes that there is a specific contra-indication to one of the active drug treatment arms (see Appendix 2; section 9.2) or that the patient should definitely be receiving one of the active drug treatment arms then that arm will not be available for randomisation for that patient. For patients who lack capacity, an advanced directive or behaviour that clearly indicates that they would not wish to participate in the trial would be considered sufficient reason to exclude them from the trial.

2.2 Consent

Informed consent should be obtained from each patient before enrolment into the study. However, if the patient lacks capacity to give consent due to the severity of their medical condition (e.g. acute respiratory failure or need for immediate ventilation) or prior disease,

¹In general, SARS-CoV-2 infection should be suspected when a patient presents with (i) typical symptoms (e.g. influenza-like illness with fever and muscle pain, or respiratory illness with cough and shortness of breath); and (ii) compatible chest X-ray findings (consolidation or ground-glass shadowing); and (iii) alternative causes have been considered unlikely or excluded (e.g. heart failure, influenza). However, the diagnosis remains a clinical one based on the opinion of the managing doctor.

then consent may be obtained from a relative acting as the patient's legally designated representative or independent doctor. Further consent will then be sought with the patient if they recover sufficiently.

Due to the poor outcomes in COVID-19 patients who require ventilation (>90% mortality in one cohort⁷), patients who lack capacity to consent due to severe disease (e.g. needs ventilation), and for whom a relative to act as the legally designated representative is not immediately available, randomisation and consequent treatment will proceed with consent provided by a treating clinician (independent of the clinician seeking to enrol the patient) who will act as the legally designated representative. Consent will then be obtained from the patient's personal legally designated representative (or directly from the patient if they recover promptly) at the earliest opportunity.

2.3 Baseline information

The following information will be recorded on the web-based form by the attending clinician or delegate:

- Patient details (e.g. name, NHS number, date of birth, sex)
- Clinician details (e.g. name)
- COVID-19 symptom onset date
- COVID-19 severity as assessed by need for supplemental oxygen or ventilation/extracorporeal membrane oxygenation
- Major comorbidity (e.g. heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease) and pregnancy
- Date of hospitalisation
- Contraindication to the study drug regimens (in the opinion of the attending clinician)
- Name of person completing the form

The person completing the form will then be asked to confirm that they wish to randomise the patient and will then be required to enter their name and e-mail address.

2.4 Main randomisation

Eligible patients will be allocated using a central web-based randomisation service (without stratification or minimisation) in to one of the following treatment arms (in addition to usual care):

- **No additional treatment**
- **Lopinavir 400mg-Ritonavir 100mg** by mouth (or nasogastric tube) every 12 hours for 10 days.
- **Corticosteroid** in the form of dexamethasone administered as an oral (liquid or tablets) or intravenous preparation 6 mg once daily for 10 days. In pregnancy or breastfeeding women, prednisolone 40 mg administered by mouth (or intravenous hydrocortisone 80 mg twice daily) should be used instead of dexamethasone.
 (Note: It is permitted to switch between the two routes of administration according to clinical circumstances.)

- **Hydroxychloroquine** by mouth for a total of 10 days as follows:

Timing	Dose
Initial	800 mg
6 hours after initial dose	800 mg
12 hours after initial dose	400 mg
24 hours after initial dose	400 mg
Every 12 hours thereafter for 9 days	400 mg

- **Azithromycin 500mg** by mouth (or nasogastric tube) or intravenously once daily for 10 days.

Study treatments do not need to be continued after discharge from hospital.

The randomisation program will allocate patients in a ratio of 2:1 between the no additional care arm and each of the other arms available. Hence if 5 arms are available, then the randomisation will be in the ratio 2:1:1:1:1. If one or more of the active drug treatments is not available at the hospital or is believed, by the attending clinician, to be contraindicated (or definitely indicated) for the specific patient, then this fact will be recorded via the web-based form prior to randomisation; random allocation will then be between the remaining arms (i.e. in a 2:1:1:1, 2:1:1 or 2:1 ratio).

2.5 Administration of allocated treatment

The details of the allocated study treatment will be displayed on the screen and can be printed or downloaded. The hospital clinicians are responsible for administration of the allocated treatment. The patient's own doctors are free to modify or stop study treatment if they feel it is in the best interests of the patient without the need for the patient to withdraw from the study (see section 2.9). This study is being conducted within hospitals. Therefore use of medication will be subject to standard pharmacy reviews (typically within 48 hours of enrolment) which will guide modifications to both the study treatment and use of concomitant medication (e.g. in the case of potential drug interactions).

2.6 Second randomisation for patients with progressive COVID-19

Patients enrolled in the RECOVERY trial and with clinical evidence of a hyper-inflammatory state may be considered for a second randomisation if they meet the following criteria:

- (i) Randomised into the RECOVERY trial no more than 21 days ago
- (ii) Clinical evidence of progressive COVID-19:
 - a. oxygen saturation <92% on room air or requiring oxygen; and
 - b. C-reactive protein ≥75 mg/L
- (iii) No medical history that might, in the opinion of the attending clinician, put the patient at significant risk if he/she were to participate in this aspect of the RECOVERY trial. (Note: Pregnancy and breastfeeding are not specific exclusion criterion.)

Note: Participants may undergo this second randomisation at any point after being first randomised, provided they meet the above criteria, and thus may receive up to two study

treatments. For some participants the second randomisation may be immediately after the first but for others it may occur a few hours or days later, if and when they deteriorate.

The following information will be recorded (on the web-based form) by the attending clinician or delegate:

- Patient details (e.g. name, NHS number, date of birth, sex)
- Clinician details (e.g. name)
- COVID-19 severity as assessed by need for supplemental oxygen or ventilation/extracorporeal membrane oxygenation
- Markers of progressive COVID-19 (oxygen saturation, C-reactive protein)
- Contraindication to the study drug treatments (in the opinion of the attending clinician)
- Name of person completing the form

The person completing the form will then be asked to confirm that they wish to randomise the patient and will then be required to enter their own name and e-mail address.

Eligible participants may be randomised between the following treatment arms:

- **No additional treatment:** There are currently no approved anti-viral or host-directed treatments for COVID-19.
- **Tocilizumab** by intravenous infusion with the dose determined by body weight:

Weight*	Dose
>40 and ≤65 kg	400 mg
>65 and ≤90 kg	600 mg
>90 kg	800 mg

* for lower weights, dosing should be 8 mg/kg

(Note: body weight may be estimated if it is impractical to weigh the patient)

Tocilizumab should be given as a single intravenous infusion over 60 minutes in 100ml sodium chloride 0.9%. A second dose may be given ≥12 and <24 hours later if, in the opinion of the attending clinician, the patient's condition has not improved.

The randomisation program will allocate patients in a ratio of 1:1 between the arms being evaluated in the second randomisation. Participants should receive standard management (including blood tests such as liver function tests and full blood count) according to their clinical need.

2.7 Collecting follow-up information

The following information will be ascertained at the time of death or discharge or at 28 days after first randomisation (whichever is sooner):

- Vital status (alive / dead, with date and presumed cause of death, if appropriate)
- Hospitalisation status (inpatient / discharged, with date of discharge, if appropriate)
- Use of ventilation (with days of use and type, if appropriate)
- Use of renal dialysis or haemofiltration

- Use of any medications included in the RECOVERY trial protocol (including drugs in the same class)

This information will be obtained and entered into the web-based IT system by a member of the hospital clinical or research staff.

Follow-up information is to be collected on all study participants, irrespective of whether or not they complete the scheduled course of allocated study treatment. Study staff will seek follow-up information through various means including medical staff, reviewing information from medical notes, routine healthcare systems, and registries.

2.8 Duration of follow-up

All randomised participants are to be followed up until death, discharge from hospital or 28 days after first randomisation (whichever is sooner). It is recognised that in the setting of this trial, there may be some variability in exactly how many days after randomisation, information on disease status is collected. This is acceptable and will be taken account of in the analyses and interpretation of results, the principle being that some information about post-randomisation disease status is better than none.

Longer term (up to 10 years) follow-up will be sought through linkage to electronic healthcare records and medical databases including those held by NHS Digital, Public Health England and equivalent bodies, and to relevant research databases (e.g. UK Biobank, Genomics England).

2.9 Withdrawal of consent

A decision by a participant that they no longer wish to continue receiving study treatment should **not** be considered to be a withdrawal of consent for follow-up. However, participants are free to withdraw consent for some or all aspects of the study at any time if they wish to do so. In accordance with regulatory guidance, de-identified data that have already been collected and incorporated in the study database will continue to be used (and any identifiable data will be destroyed).

For participants who lack capacity, if their legal representative withdraws consent for treatment or methods of follow-up then these activities would cease.

3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

All analyses for reports, presentations and publications will be prepared by the coordinating centre at the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford. A more detailed statistical analysis plan will be developed by the investigators and published on the study website whilst still blind to any analyses of aggregated data on study outcomes by treatment allocation.

3.1 Outcomes

For each pairwise comparison with the ‘no additional treatment’ arm, the **primary objective** is to provide reliable estimates of the effect of study treatments on all-cause mortality at 28 days after first randomisation (with subsidiary analyses of cause of death and of death at various timepoints following discharge).

The **secondary objectives** are to assess the effects of study treatments on duration of hospital stay; the need for (and duration of) ventilation; and the need for renal replacement therapy.

Data from routine healthcare records (including linkage to medical databases held by organisations such as NHS Digital) and from relevant research studies (such as UK Biobank and Genomics England) will allow subsidiary analyses of the effect of the study treatments on particular non-fatal events (e.g. ascertained through linkage to Hospital Episode Statistics), the influence of pre-existing major co-morbidity (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, hepatic insufficiency, severe depression, severe kidney impairment, immunosuppression), and longer-term outcomes (e.g. 6 month survival) as well as in particular sub-categories of patient (e.g. by genotype, pregnancy).

3.2 Methods of analysis

Comparisons will be made between all participants randomised to the different treatment arms, irrespective of whether they received their allocated treatment (“intention-to-treat” analyses).

For time-to-event analyses, each treatment group will be compared with the no additional treatment group using the log-rank test. Kaplan-Meier estimates for the time to event will also be plotted (with associated log-rank p-values). The log-rank ‘observed minus expected’ statistic (and its variance) will also be used to estimate the average event rate ratio (and its confidence interval) for those allocated to each treatment group versus the no additional treatment group. For binary outcomes where the timing is unknown, the odds ratio and absolute risk difference will be calculated with confidence intervals and p-value reported. For the primary outcome (death within 28 days of first randomisation), discharge alive before 28 days will assume safety from the event (in the absence of additional data confirming otherwise).

Pairwise comparisons will be made between each treatment arm and the no additional treatment arm (reference group). However, since not all treatments may be available or suitable for all patients, those in the no additional treatment arm will only be included in a given comparison if, at the point of their randomisation, they *could* alternatively have been randomised to the active treatment of interest. Adjustment for multiple treatment

comparisons due to the multi-arm design will be made using the Dunnett test. All p-values will be 2-sided.

Pre-specified subgroup analysis will be conducted for the primary outcome using the statistical test for interaction (or test for trend where appropriate) for the following: disease severity; time since onset of symptoms; sex; age group).

Further details will be fully described in the Statistical Analysis Plan.

4 DATA AND SAFETY MONITORING

4.1 Recording Suspected Serious Adverse Reactions

The focus is on those events that, based on a single case, are highly likely to be related to the study medication. Examples include anaphylaxis, Stevens Johnson Syndrome, or bone marrow failure, where there is no other plausible explanation.

Any Serious Adverse Event² that is believed with a reasonable probability to be due to one of the study treatments will be considered a Suspected Serious Adverse Reaction. In making this assessment, there should be consideration of the probability of an alternative cause (for example, COVID-19 itself or some other condition preceding randomisation), the timing of the event with respect to study treatment, the response to withdrawal of the study treatment, and (where appropriate) the response to subsequent re-challenge.

All Suspected Serious Adverse Reactions should be reported by telephone to the Central Coordinating Office and recorded on the study IT system immediately.

4.2 Central assessment and onward reporting of SUSARs

Clinicians at the Central Coordinating Office are responsible for expedited review of reports of SSARs received. Additional information (including the reason for considering it both serious and related, and relevant medical and medication history) will be sought.

The focus of SUSAR reporting will be on those events that, based on a single case, are highly likely to be related to the study medication. To this end, anticipated events that are either efficacy endpoints, consequences of the underlying disease, or common in the study population will be exempted from expedited reporting. Thus the following events will be exempted from expedited reporting:

- (i) Events which are the consequence of COVID-19; and
- (ii) Common events which are the consequence of conditions preceding randomisation.

² Serious Adverse Events are defined as those adverse events that result in death; are life-threatening; require in-patient hospitalisation or prolongation of existing hospitalisation; result in persistent or significant disability or incapacity; result in congenital anomaly or birth defect; or are important medical events in the opinion of the responsible investigator (that is, not life-threatening or resulting in hospitalisation, but may jeopardise the participant or require intervention to prevent one or other of the outcomes listed above).

Any SSARs that are not exempt will be reviewed by a Central Coordinating Office clinician and an assessment made of whether the event is “expected” or not (assessed against the relevant Summary of Product Characteristics or Investigator Brochure). Any SSARs that are not expected would be considered a Suspected Unexpected Serious Adverse Reaction (SUSAR).

All confirmed SUSARs will be reported to the Chair of the DMC and to relevant regulatory authorities, ethics committees, and investigators in an expedited manner in accordance with regulatory requirements.

4.3 Recording other Adverse Events

In addition to recording Suspected Serious Adverse Reactions (see section 4.1), information will be collected on all deaths and efforts will be made to ascertain the underlying cause. Other serious or non-serious adverse events will not be recorded. It is anticipated that for some sub-studies, more detailed information on adverse events (e.g. through linkage to medical databases) or on other effects of the treatment (e.g. laboratory or radiological features) will be recorded and analysed but this is not a requirement of the core protocol.

4.4 Role of the Data Monitoring Committee (DMC)

During the study, interim analyses of all study data will be supplied in strict confidence to the independent DMC. The DMC will request such analyses at a frequency relevant to the emerging data from this and other studies.

The DMC will independently evaluate these analyses and any other information considered relevant. The DMC will determine if, in their view, the randomised comparisons in the study have provided evidence on mortality that is strong enough (with a range of uncertainty around the results that is narrow enough) to affect national and global treatment strategies. In such a circumstance, the DMC will inform the Trial Steering Committee who will make the results available to the public and amend the trial arms accordingly. Unless this happens, the Steering Committee, Chief Investigator, study staff, investigators, study participants, funders and other partners will remain blind to the interim results until 28 days after the last patient has been randomised for a particular intervention arm (at which point analyses may be conducted comparing that arm with the no additional treatment arm).

4.5 Blinding

This is an open-label study. However, while the study is in progress, access to tabular results of study outcomes by allocated treatment allocation will not be available to the research team, patients, or members of the Steering Committee (unless the DMC advises otherwise).

5 QUALITY MANAGEMENT

5.1 Quality By Design Principles

In accordance with the principles of Good Clinical Practice and the recommendations and guidelines issued by regulatory agencies, the design, conduct and analysis of this trial is focussed on issues that might have a material impact on the wellbeing and safety of study participants (hospitalised patients with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection) and the reliability of the results that would inform the care for future patients.

The critical factors that influence the ability to deliver these quality objectives are:

- to minimise the burden on busy clinicians working in an overstretched hospital during a major epidemic
- to ensure that suitable patients have access to the trial medication without impacting or delaying other aspects of their emergency care
- to provide information on the study to patients and clinicians in a timely and readily digestible fashion but without impacting adversely on other aspects of the trial or the patient's care
- to allow individual clinicians to use their judgement about whether any of the treatment arms are not suitable for the patient
- to collect comprehensive information on the mortality and disease status

In assessing any risks to patient safety and well-being, a key principle is that of proportionality. Risks associated with participation in the trial must be considered in the context of usual care. At present, there are no proven treatments for COVID-19, basic hospital care (staffing, beds, ventilatory support) may well be overstretched, and mortality for hospitalised patients may be around 10% (or more in those who are older or have significant co-morbidity).

5.2 Training and monitoring

The focus will be on those factors that are critical to quality (i.e. the safety of the participants and the reliability of the trial results). Remedial actions would focus on issues with the potential to have a substantial impact on the safety of the study participants or the reliability of the results.

The study will be conducted in accordance with the principles of International Conference on Harmonisation Guidelines for Good Clinical Research Practice (ICH-GCP) and relevant local, national and international regulations. Any serious breach of GCP in the conduct of the clinical trial will be handled in accordance with regulatory requirements. Prior to initiation of the study at each Local Clinical Centre (LCC), the Central Coordinating Office (CCO) will confirm that the LCC has adequate facilities and resources to carry out the study. LCC lead investigators and study staff will be provided with training materials.

In the context of this epidemic, visits to hospital sites is generally not appropriate as they could increase the risks of spreading infection, and in the context of this trial they generally would not influence the reliability of the trial results or the well-being of the participants. In

exceptional circumstances, the CCO may arrange monitoring visits to LCCs as considered appropriate based on perceived training needs and the results of central statistical monitoring of study data.^{8,9} The purpose of such visits will be to ensure that the study is being conducted in accordance with the protocol, to help LCC staff to resolve any local problems, and to provide extra training focussed on specific needs. No routine source data verification will take place.

5.3 Data management

LCC clinic staff will use the bespoke study web-based applications for study management and to record participant data (including case report forms) in accordance with the protocol. Data will be held in central databases located at the CCO or on secure cloud servers. In some circumstances (e.g. where there is difficulty accessing the internet or necessary IT equipment), paper case report forms may be required with subsequent data entry by either LCC or CCO staff. Although data entry should be mindful of the desire to maintain integrity and audit trails, in the circumstances of this epidemic, the priority is on the timely entry of data that is sufficient to support reliable analysis and interpretation about treatment effects. CCO staff will be responsible for provision of the relevant web-based applications and for generation of data extracts for analyses.

All data access will be controlled by unique usernames and passwords, and any changes to data will require the user to enter their username and password as an electronic signature in accordance with regulatory requirements.¹⁰ Staff will have access restricted to the functionality and data that are appropriate for their role in the study.

5.4 Source documents and archiving

Source documents for the study constitute the records held in the study main database. These will be retained for at least 25 years from the completion of the study. Identifiable data will be retained only for so long as it is required to maintain linkage with routine data sources (see section 2.8). The sponsor and regulatory agencies will have the right to conduct confidential audits of such records in the CCO and LCCs (but should be mindful of the workload facing participating hospitals and the infection control requirements during this epidemic).

6 OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

6.1 Sponsor and coordination

The University of Oxford will act as the trial Sponsor. The trial will be coordinated by a Central Coordinating Office within the Nuffield Department of Population Health staffed by members of the two registered clinical trials units – the Clinical Trial Service Unit and the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit Clinical Trials Unit. The data will be collected, analysed and published independently of the source of funding.

6.2 Funding

This study is supported by a grant to the University of Oxford from UK Research and Innovation/National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and by core funding provided by

NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre, the Wellcome Trust, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Health Data Research UK, and the Medical Research Council Population Health Research Unit, and NIHR Clinical Trials Unit Support Funding.

6.3 Indemnity

The University has a specialist insurance policy in place which would operate in the event of any participant suffering harm as a result of their involvement in the research (Newline Underwriting Management Ltd, at Lloyd's of London). NHS indemnity operates in respect of the clinical treatment that is provided.

6.4 Local Clinical Centres

The study will be conducted at multiple hospitals (Local Clinical Centres) within the UK. At each LCC, a lead investigator will be responsible for trial activities but much of the work will be carried out by medical staff attending patients with COVID-19 within the hospital and by hospital research nurses, medical students and other staff with appropriate education, training, and experience.

6.5 Supply of study treatments

For licensed treatments (e.g. Lopinavir-Ritonavir, corticosteroids, Tocilizumab) all aspects of treatment supply, storage, and management will be in accordance with standard local policy and practice for prescription medications. Treatment issue to randomised participants will be by prescription.

For unlicensed treatments, manufacture, packaging and delivery will be the responsibility of the pharmaceutical company and Department of Health and Social Care. Treatment issue to randomised participants will be in accordance with local practice (and may be in line with the processes required for routine prescriptions or compassionate use).

Study treatments will not be labelled beyond other than as required for routine clinical use. They will be stored alongside other routine medications with no additional monitoring. No accountability records will be kept beyond those used for routine prescriptions.

6.6 End of trial

The end of the scheduled treatment phase is defined as the date of the last follow-up visit of the last participant. In the UK, it is intended to extend follow-up for a year or more beyond the final study visit through linkage to routine medical records and central medical databases. The end of the study is the date of the final data extraction from NHS Digital (anticipated to be 10 years after the last patient is enrolled).

6.7 Publications and reports

The Steering Committee will be responsible for drafting the main reports from the study and for review of any other reports. In general, papers initiated by the Steering Committee (including the primary manuscript) will be written in the name of the RECOVERY

Collaborative Group, with individual investigators named personally at the end of the report (or, to comply with journal requirements, in web-based material posted with the report).

The Steering Committee will also establish a process by which proposals for additional publications (including from independent external researchers) are considered by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will facilitate the use of the study data and approval will not be unreasonably withheld. However, the Steering Committee will need to be satisfied that any proposed publication is of high quality, honours the commitments made to the study participants in the consent documentation and ethical approvals, and is compliant with relevant legal and regulatory requirements (e.g. relating to data protection and privacy). The Steering Committee will have the right to review and comment on any draft manuscripts prior to publication.

6.8 Substudies

Proposals for substudies must be approved by the Steering Committee and by the relevant ethics committee and competent authorities (where required) as a substantial amendment or separate study before they begin. In considering such proposals, the Steering Committee will need to be satisfied that the proposed substudy is worthwhile and will not compromise the main study in any way (e.g. by impairing recruitment or the ability of the participating hospitals to provide care to all patients under their care).

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8 VERSION HISTORY

Version number	Date	Brief Description of Changes
1.0	13-Mar-2020	Initial version
2.0	21-Mar-2020	Addition of Hydroxychloroquine. Administrative changes and other clarifications.
3.0	07-Apr-2020	Extension of eligibility to those with suspected COVID-19 Addition of Azithromycin arm. Addition of inclusion of adults who lack permanently lack capacity. Change to primary outcome from in-hospital death to death within 28 days of randomization.
4.0	14-Apr-2020	Addition of second randomisation to Tocilizumab vs. standard of care among patients with progressive COVID-19.

9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1: Information about the treatment arms

All patients will receive usual care in the participating hospital.

No additional treatment: There are no proven therapies for COVID-19.

Lopinavir-Ritonavir: Lopinavir is a human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV-1) protease inhibitor, which is combined with ritonavir to increase lopinavir's plasma half-life. It is licensed in adults and children from the age of 14 days (2 years in Scotland). It has been widely used in pregnant women.¹ Lopinavir has in vitro inhibitory activity against SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and MERS-CoV.^{2-4 5} In common marmosets infected with MERS-CoV, animals treated with lopinavir/ritonavir had improved clinical, radiological, and pathological outcomes and reduced viral loads compared with untreated animals.⁶ In one single-center, open-label study of the addition of lopinavir 400mg/ritonavir 100mg to ribavirin and corticosteroids in SARS patients the risk of adverse clinical outcomes (acute respiratory distress syndrome [ARDS] or death) was significantly lower (2.4% v 28.8%, $p < 0.001$) compared to a historical control group.²

The most common short-term side effects in adults are diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting. It must not be used by patients with severe liver disease. It should not be co-administered with medicinal products that are highly dependent on CYP3A for clearance and for which elevated plasma concentrations are associated with serious and/or life-threatening events (see Summary of Product Characteristics). Storage should be as per conditions in the Summary of Product Characteristics.

Dexamethasone: Favourable modulation of the immune response is considered one of the possible mechanisms by which corticosteroids might be beneficial in the treatment of severe acute respiratory coronavirus infections, including COVID-19, SARS and MERS. Common to severe cases of these infections is the presence of hypercytokinemia (a cytokine 'storm') and development of acute lung injury or adult respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS).⁷⁻¹⁰ Pathologically, diffuse alveolar damage is found in patients who die from these infections.¹¹ A growing volume of clinical trial data from patients with severe community acquired pneumonia, ARDS and septic shock suggest benefit from low-to-moderate dose corticosteroids in relation to mortality and length of stay.¹²⁻¹⁴

In trials of low-to-moderate doses of corticosteroids, the main adverse effect has been hyperglycaemia.^{13,15} A systematic review of (mainly low-dose) corticosteroid trials in severe sepsis and septic shock did not identify any increased risk of gastroduodenal bleeding, superinfection or neuromuscular weakness; an association with an increased risk of hyperglycaemia (RR 1.16, 95% CI 1.07 to 1.25) and hypernatraemia (RR 1.61, 95% CI 1.26 to 2.06) was noted.¹⁶ Dexamethasone has a) minimal mineralocorticoid activity and does not affect sodium and water balance, thus avoiding potential problems with fluid retention which are not uncommon in severe viral pneumonitis/ARDS, and b) a comparatively long biological half-life of 36 to 54 hours enabling once a day dosing. In pregnancy, prednisolone 40 mg administered by mouth (or intravenous hydrocortisone 80 mg twice daily) should be

used instead of dexamethasone. Storage should be as per conditions in the Summary of Product Characteristics.

Hydroxychloroquine: Chloroquine (CQ), an antimalarial drug discovered in 1934 and introduced generally in 1947, is the drug to which humans have been most exposed, with an annual global consumption of hundreds of metric tonnes for over 50 years. It is inexpensive, simple to administer, and, at the appropriate doses, has an excellent safety profile in all age groups and has been the prophylactic drug of choice in pregnancy ¹⁷. In addition to its antimalarial use both chloroquine and the closely related hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) are used in continuous daily dosing for rheumatoid arthritis, systemic and discoid lupus erythematosus and psoriatic arthritis. HCQ is reported to have better safety profile than CQ, better gastrointestinal tolerability, and less retinal toxicity ¹⁸.

CQ has significant antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 in cell culture ($EC_{50} = 1.13 \mu\text{M}$; $CC_{50} > 100 \mu\text{M}$, $SI > 88.50$), as it does for the related SARS-CoV-1 ¹⁹⁻²². CQ blocks virus infection by increasing endosomal pH required for virus/ cell fusion, as well as interfering with the glycosylation of cellular receptors of SARS-CoV.²¹ In SARS-CoV-2 infected Vero cells, HCQ ($EC_{50}=0.72 \mu\text{M}$) has been reported to be more potent than CQ ($EC_{50}=5.47 \mu\text{M}$) ²³, although Liu et al reported that CQ was more potent than HCQ.²⁴ These are relatively high levels by comparison with therapeutic exposures in the treatment of malaria but could be achieved with daily oral dosing. Chloroquine has complex pharmacokinetic properties and although the relationship between plasma concentrations and concentrations in respiratory epithelium is not known precisely, in rats the concentration in lung is between 124 and 748-fold that in plasma ²⁵. If active, HCQ concentrations in the human lung would be expected to exceed those required for the EC_{90} after an initial dose. There are preliminary reports emerging from China and France of clinical benefit in the treatment of COVID-19 infections ^{26,27}.

The recommended adult dosing of chloroquine for treatment of non-falciparum malaria (BNF) is: Initially 620 mg, then 310 mg after 6-8 hours, then 310 mg daily for 2 days. This is equivalent to 930mg base in first 24 hours. This is a loading dose to ensure the necessary blood concentrations are achieved rapidly.

Hydroxychloroquine is very similar to chloroquine. It is used mainly to treat rheumatoid arthritis and other related conditions. The adult dose is usually 400-600mg per day (equivalent to 310 to 465 mg base). Sometimes 800mg per day is given.

The dose in RECOVERY is Hydroxychloroquine (155mg base per 200 mg tablet):

Initial dose:	4 tablets
6 hours after initial dose:	4 tablets
12 hours after initial dose:	2 tablets
24 hours after initial dose:	2 tablets
Thereafter:	2 tablets every 12 hours for a total of 10 days

12x155mg = 1860mg base = in first 24 hours

So the loading dose in RECOVERY is twice the normal dose for treating malaria. However, this dose has been selected based on the available data of the IC_{50} for SARS-CoV-2. The

objective is to reach plasma concentrations that are inhibitory to the virus as soon as safely possible. The plasma concentrations that will result are at the higher end of those encountered during steady state treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Given the significant mortality in patients hospitalised with COVID-19, this dose is felt to be justified. This is the schedule that has been adopted by the World Health Organisation. No dose adjustment is required for weight based on the doses defined in this protocol.

Azithromycin: Azithromycin is a macrolide antibiotic. In addition to their antimicrobial properties, the macrolide antibiotics are known to have immunomodulatory activity. The mechanism of immunomodulation includes decreased production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and inhibition of neutrophil activation.²⁸⁻³⁰ Macrolides are widely used both in infectious pneumonia due to their antimicrobial activity and in chronic inflammatory lung disease due to the immunomodulatory effects.³¹ Azithromycin is preferred over other macrolides because data suggest it has stronger immunomodulatory effects than other macrolides.³⁰

The use of macrolides in influenza-associated pneumonia has been associated with a faster reduction in inflammatory cytokines and, in combination with naproxen, decreased mortality.³²⁻³⁴ Observational studies in MERS-CoV have not demonstrated a mortality benefit of macrolide use.³⁵ Macrolides have not been evaluated in severe betacoronavirus infections in randomised controlled trials. The safety of macrolides is well established.

Tocilizumab is a monoclonal antibody that binds to the receptor for IL-6, blocking IL-6 signalling and reduces inflammation. Tocilizumab is licensed for use in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and for use in people aged at least 2 years with chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cell-induced severe or life-threatening cytokine release syndrome.

Severe COVID-19 is associated with a hyper-inflammatory state with elevated ESR, C-reactive protein, D-dimers, lactate dehydrogenase, ferritin, and increased levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines including as IL-1 and IL-6.³⁶⁻³⁸ [ENREF 3 46](#) There have been published and unpublished (pre-print) case series reports of the successful treatment of COVID-19 patients with IL-6 inhibitors.^{36,39} IL-6 inhibitors have not been evaluated for the treatment of COVID-19 in randomised controlled trials.

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9.2 Appendix 2: Drug specific contraindications and cautions

Lopinavir/ritonavir

- Severe hepatic insufficiency*
- Co-administration with medicinal products that are highly dependent on CYP3A for clearance and for which elevated plasma concentrations are associated with serious and/or life-threatening events. This includes alfuzosin, ranolazine, amiodarone, dronaderone, fusidic acid, neratinib, venetoclax, colchicine, astemizole, terfenadine, lurasidone, pimozide, quetiapine, dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, methylergonovine, cisapride, elbasvir/grazoprevir, ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir, lovastatin, simvastatin, lomitapide, avanafil, sildenafil, vardenafil, midazolam, triazolam (See Summary of Product Characteristics for more detail). It may be appropriate to temporarily withhold such concomitant medication while the patient is receiving lopinavir/ritonavir.

Dexamethasone

- Known contra-indication to short-term Dexamethasone.

Hydroxychloroquine

- Known prolonged QTc interval
- Caution: Co-administration with medications that prolong the QT interval (e.g. macrolides, quinolones) is not an absolute contraindication, but it may be appropriate to check the QT interval by performing an ECG.

Azithromycin

- Known prolonged QTc interval
- Co-administration with chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine
- Known hypersensitivity to macrolide antibiotic

Tocilizumab

- Known hypersensitivity to Tocilizumab.
(Note: Pregnancy and breastfeeding are not exclusion criteria.)

* If these conditions are recorded on the baseline case report form, patients will be ineligible for randomisation to that arm of the study.

Note: This study is being conducted within hospitals. Therefore use of medication will be subject to standard medication reviews (typically within 48 hours of enrolment) and clinical assessments (including appropriate blood tests) which will guide modifications to both the study treatment and use of concomitant medication (e.g. in the case of potential drug interactions). The doctor may decide whether it is appropriate to stop such medications temporarily to allow the patient to complete the course of their assigned intervention.

Although all available data on use in pregnancy are reassuring, since the effect of some of the treatments on unborn babies is uncertain, female participants who are not already pregnant will be advised that they should not get pregnant within 3 months of the completion of trial treatment(s).

9.3 Appendix 3: Organisational Structure and Responsibilities

Chief Investigator

The Chief Investigator has overall responsibility for:

- (i) Design and conduct of the Study in collaboration with the Steering Committee;
- (ii) Preparation of the Protocol and subsequent revisions;

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (see Section 9.4 for list of members) is responsible for:

- (i) Agreement of the final Protocol and the Data Analysis Plans;
- (ii) Reviewing progress of the study and, if necessary, deciding on Protocol changes;
- (iii) Review and approval of study publications and substudy proposals;
- (iv) Reviewing new studies that may be of relevance.

Data Monitoring Committee

The independent Data Monitoring Committee is responsible for:

- (i) Reviewing unblinded interim analyses according to the Protocol;
- (ii) Advising the Steering Committee if, in their view, the randomised data provide evidence that may warrant a change in the protocol (e.g. modification or cessation of one or more of the treatment arms).

Central Coordinating Office (CCO)

The CCO is responsible for the overall coordination of the Study, including:

- (i) Study planning and organisation of Steering Committee meetings;
- (ii) Ensuring necessary regulatory and ethics committee approvals;
- (iii) Development of Standard Operating Procedures and computer systems
- (iv) Monitoring overall progress of the study;
- (v) Provision of study materials to LCCs;
- (vi) Monitoring and reporting safety information in line with the protocol and regulatory requirements;
- (vii) Dealing with technical, medical and administrative queries from LCCs.

Local Clinical Centres (LCC)

The LCC lead investigator and LCC clinic staff are responsible for:

- (i) Obtaining all relevant local permissions (assisted by the CCO)
- (ii) All trial activities at the LCC, including appropriate training and supervision for clinical staff
- (iii) Conducting trial procedures at the LCC in line with all relevant local policies and procedures;
- (iv) Dealing with enquiries from participants and others.

9.4 Appendix 4: Organisational Details

STEERING COMMITTEE

(Major organisational and policy decisions, and scientific advice; blinded to treatment allocation)

Chief Investigator	Peter Horby
Deputy Chief Investigator	Martin Landray
Clinical Trial Unit Leads	Richard Haynes, Edmund Juszczak
Co-investigators	Kenneth Baillie (Scotland Lead), Thomas Jaki, Katie Jeffery, Wei Shen Lim, Alan Montgomery, Kathy Rowan

DATA MONITORING COMMITTEE

(Interim analyses and response to specific concerns)

Chair	Peter Sandercock
Members	Janet Darbyshire, David DeMets, Robert Fowler, David Kalloo, Ian Roberts, Janet Wittes
Statistician (non-voting)	Jonathan Emberson, Natalie Staplin

To enquire about the trial, contact the RECOVERY Central Coordinating Office

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To RANDOMISE a patient, visit:



Website: www.recoverytrial.net
