

Desperation, misinformation: how the ivermectin craze spread across the world | The Guardian

By Nick Robins-Early

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As Covid-19 cases in Peru rose rapidly during the early months of the pandemic, public interest in the drug ivermectin surged.

Misleading information suggesting the drug, used to treat parasites in humans and livestock, had been proven effective against coronavirus reached many Peruvians online, doctors told the Guardian.

With vaccines still in development, desperate physicians soon began administering ivermectin to patients and, despite a lack of evidence of the drug's effectiveness in treating Covid, Peru's government included it in treatment guidelines in early May 2020. A frenzy ensued.

"We ran out of ivermectin in all the pharmacies," recalled Dr Patricia Garcia, the country's former health minister. "Then there was a black market, and that's when things got even worse because the veterinary ivermectin use started."

Like several other Latin American countries, Peru in 2020 experienced a dire Covid emergency that overwhelmed its underfunded health care system. Many residents turned to self-medicating with ivermectin, Garcia said. Local politicians and television hosts told audiences to take the drug. Some Peruvians began taking ivermectin that was formulated for livestock and administered through injections, and images of people with necrotic tissue on their skin from shots made their way to Garcia's desk.

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