

How a story about ivermectin and hospital beds went wrong | Columbia Journalism Review

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Last week, KFOR, a local news outlet in Oklahoma, published a story that contained some terrifying information: so many people in the state were hospitalized due to overdoses of ivermectin—a drug originally designed for horses, which some anti-vaccine sources have promoted (incorrectly) as a defense against COVID-19—that there was no room in intensive-care units for other patients, including those with gunshot wounds. The story contained quotes from an interview with Dr. Jason McElyea, a local physician, and was quickly picked up by a number of national outlets, including Rolling Stone magazine, the Guardian, Newsweek magazine, and Business Insider. A producer for MSNBC repeated the claim on Twitter (although she later deleted it), as did the Rachel Maddow show.

Not long afterward, the story started to spring some major holes. As detailed on Twitter by Drew Holden—a public-affairs consultant in Washington, DC, and former assistant to a Republican congressman—and by Scott Alexander on his popular blog, Astral Codex Ten, the first sign that all was not right came with a statement from a large Oklahoma hospital, which said that there was no bed shortage due to ivermectin overdoses, and that the doctor quoted in the KFOR report hadn't worked there in months.

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