

Indian Bar Association Rebukes WHO Chief Scientist Over Ivermectin Guidelines for COVID Treatment

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WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan

The Indian Bar Association (IBA), a voluntary organisation, say it has served a [second legal notice](#) to WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan for allegedly “running a disinformation campaign against Ivermectin”, after WHO failed to recommend use of the anti-parasitic drug as a COVID-19 treatment – due to a lack of evidence of efficacy.

The Mumbai-based IBA sent a [51-page notice](#) to Swaminathan on 25 May, and a follow-up on 13 June, reacting to her statements saying that [WHO does not recommend the use of the drug as a treatment for COVID-19, except in the context of clinical trials](#).

A tweet by Swaminathan specifically advising against the use of Ivermectin for COVID-19, which the IBA has called “controversial”, has since been deleted.

The tweet, issued under Swaminathan's handle, @doctorsoumya, on 10 May 2021 stated that “Safety and efficacy are important when using any drug for a new indication. @WHO recommends against the use of Ivermectin for #COVID19 except within clinical trials.”

The WHO has said there is, to date, insufficient evidence to demonstrate Ivermectin's effectiveness against COVID-19, and has thus not included it as a recommended COVID treatment – except in clinical trial studies that might yield better evidence.

In her role as WHO's Chief Scientist, Swaminathan has also spoken out against the use of politically popular, but scientifically unfounded, treatments, including hydroxychloroquine and Remdesivir – the latter of which even received [United States Food and Drug Administration](#) emergency use approval, despite what WHO said was a lack of evidence about efficacy.

The IBA, which Indian insiders say tends to parrot positions of the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has attacked Swaminathan, a former senior Indian medical official, on a personal level, calling her statements “highly unconscionable, misleading and issued with ulterior purposes and deliberate intention to underplay the effectiveness of Ivermectin in treatment COVID-19.”

“The legal notice is just the first step. We are going to be taking it forward. There are forces working to repress Ivermectin for reasons mentioned in the notice,” said Dipali Ojha, the author of the notice and head of the IBA's legal cell.

In a response, WHO said it “regretted” the unwarranted attacks against senior officials in the media,” adding that despite the publication of the alleged suit, it was unaware of any formal proceedings having been filed by the IBA. Of note, the group is a voluntary organisation with no statutory or regulatory status in India.

“WHO's assessment of Ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19 is based on the current state of scientific evidence. WHO guidelines are developed by an independent global guidelines development group and are updated regularly when new data becomes available,” a spokesperson said.

UK and US Medical Associations in Support of Ivermectin for COVID-19 Treatment



Anti-parasitic drug Ivermectin

The IBA has said its case is anchored in expert recommendations favouring the use of Ivermectin, and issued by the US-based ‘[Front Line COVID-19 Critical Care Alliance](#)’ (FLCCC) and the [British Ivermectin Recommendation Development \(BIRD\) Panel](#), which claim some studies have shown that Ivermectin use can reduce the risk of contracting COVID by over 90% and mortality by 68-90%.

An FLCCC [public statement](#) issued in mid-May also criticised the negative findings of the European Medical Agency as well as a WHO Ivermectin expert group vis a vis use of the drug.


The FLCCC said the WHO Ivermectin Guidelines Development Group (GDG) had “arbitrarily and severely limited the extent and diversity of study designs considered” in its review – excluding a large number of observational and quasi randomized-controlled studies that had yielded positive results for Ivermectin's use.

It described the WHO exclusion criteria as “highly irregular and inexplicable” which could have “but one rational explanation: the GDG Panel had a predetermined, nonscientific objective, which is to recommend against Ivermectin.”

Both the FLCCC and BIRD also issued a [joint statement](#) supporting inclusion of Ivermectin in the COVID treatment guidelines of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.




Even so, the directorate general of health services at [India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#) recently dropped ivermectin from its list of recommended COVID treatments.

Following the national ministry's decision, Swaminathan described the revised guidelines as “simple, rational, and clear guidance for physicians, though the IBA alleges that the intention was to “misguide and confuse the doctors and the public at large.”

**Soumya Swaminathan**
@doctorsoumya · [Follow](#)

Evidence based guidelines from @mohfw DGHS - simple, rational and clear guidance for physicians. Should be translated and disseminated in all Indian languages. Can be updated as and when new evidence becomes available @drharshvardhan @WHOSEARO [dghs.gov.in/WriteReadData/...](#)

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