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Korea offers niclosamide-based drug as possible cure for COVID-19 variants

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Aiming for emergency use authorisation in the first half of 2022

Experimental results have been published for the first time showing that an antiviral drug containing niclosamide, an anthelmintic, in combination with dexamethasone, an anti-inflammatory drug, produces a 'synergistic effect' for severe COVID-19 patients. There is a growing possibility that a combination therapy for severe COVID-19 patients, for which there is currently no suitable treatment, may be developed for the first time in Korea.

South Korean firm Hyundai Bioscience recently conducted an efficacy testing at Korea Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology on COVID-19-infected hamsters. It was announced that as a result of oral administration of CP-COV03, an oral treatment for COVID-19, combined with dexamethasone, the therapeutic effect was found to be 2.1 times higher than that of dexamethasone alone.

Currently, there are virtually no effective antiviral drugs for severe COVID-19 patients. As a temporary measure, doctors are prescribing a limited number of drugs such as remdesivir, the only approved antiviral agent for COVID-19, and Dexamethasone. However remdesivir's efficacy was questioned by WHO, and COVID mutation due to drug resistance was reported from Yale University research.

Niclosamide, the main component of CP-COV03, has a mechanism of targeting host cells, unlike most antiviral agents that target the virus. As a result, Hyundai Bioscience explains that it will exhibit antiviral efficacy without being affected by the mutations of COVID-19, such as the Omicron and Delta variants.