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# WHO launches global megatrial of the four most promising coronavirus treatments

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A drug combo already used against HIV. A malaria treatment first tested during World War II. A new antiviral whose promise against Ebola fizzled last year.

Could any of these drugs hold the key to saving coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) patients from serious harm or death? On Friday, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a large global trial, called SOLIDARITY, to find out whether any can treat infections with the new coronavirus for the dangerous respiratory disease. It's an unprecedented effort—an all-out, coordinated push to collect robust scientific data rapidly during a pandemic. The study, which could include many thousands of patients in dozens of countries, has been designed to be as simple as possible so that even hospitals overwhelmed by an onslaught of COVID-19 patients can participate.

With about 15% of COVID-19 patients suffering from severe disease and hospitals being overwhelmed, treatments are desperately needed. So rather than coming up with compounds from scratch that may take years to develop and test, researchers and public health agencies are looking to repurpose drugs already approved for other diseases and known to be largely safe. They're also looking at unapproved drugs that have performed well in animal studies with the other two deadly coronaviruses, which cause severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS).

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