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News Update

# New Hampshire House of Representatives Recognizes Importance of Ivermectin

The New Hampshire House of Representatives has voted to make ivermectin readily available, without prior prescription, at pharmacies throughout the state. New Hampshire's House Bill 1022 is an act "permitting pharmacists to dispense the drug ivermectin by means of a standing order."<sup>i</sup> This welcome bill accomplishes two ends. First, it gives individuals over-the-counter access to an essential medicine for the therapeutic treatment of COVID-19. Second, it protects physicians by preventing the New Hampshire Medical Licensing Board from penalizing doctors who prescribe ivermectin.

The drug ivermectin, and its use in the therapeutic treatment of COVID-19, continues to be a subject of confusion and controversy. Produced and first marketed by the American multinational pharmaceutical company Merck & Co in 1970, ivermectin was initially used to treat the parasitic disease Onchocerciasis, commonly known as River Blindness. In 2015 William C. Campbell and Satoshi Omura were awarded the "Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine" for their discovery and purification of the active compound avermectin, which was in turn modified to ivermectin. According to the "Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine" 2015 press release, the importance of ivermectin "for improving the health and wellbeing of millions of individuals... primarily in the poorest regions of the world, is immeasurable."<sup>ii</sup> Indeed, somewhere in the vicinity of 3.7 billion doses of ivermectin have been administered globally in the past three decades. <sup>iii</sup>

With widespread administration over multiple decades, ivermectin has a well-known safety profile. The World Health Organization lists it as an essential medicine—an important designation: "Essential medicines... satisfy the priority health care needs of a population... [and] are intended to be available in functioning health systems at all times, in appropriate dosage forms, of assured quality and at prices individuals and health systems can afford."<sup>iv</sup>

Originally developed as an antiparasitic, ivermectin has proven remarkably effective, more recently, in combatting COVID-19. The therapeutic repurposing of drugs—particularly those with well-known safety profiles—is standard medical practice. Yet, as advocates for New Hampshire’s House Bill 1022 have noted, with the intense politicization surrounding COVID-19, doctors are afraid to prescribe and pharmacies are afraid to dispense. New Hampshire is not alone in recognizing the problem—some twenty-eight additional states have put forward similar bills to protect doctors and pharmacists and to guarantee individuals’ rights to access repurposed drugs, like ivermectin, for the therapeutic management of COVID-19.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://legiscan.com/NH/text/HB1022/id/2461689>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2015/press-release/>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692\(20\)34898-4/fulltext](https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692(20)34898-4/fulltext)

<sup>iv</sup> [WHO model list of essential medicines - 22nd list, 2021](#)

<sup>v</sup> <https://track.govhawk.com/reports/2IWe3/public>