**Name of Journal:** *World Journal of Meta-Analysis*

**Manuscript NO:** 81086

**Manuscript Type:** OPINION REVIEW

**Opinion on double strategy to fight against COVID-19: Vaccination and home treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs**

Fazio S *et al*. Vaccination and home treatment with NSAIDs

Serafino Fazio, Flora Affuso

**Serafino Fazio,** Department of Internal Medicine, Federico II University of Naples, Napoli 80100, Italy

**Flora Affuso,** Independent Researcher, Home, Gallipoli 73014, Lecce, Italy

**Author contributions:** Affuso F, and Fazio S contributed equally to this work; both authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

**Corresponding author: Serafino Fazio, MD, retired Associate Professor,** Department of Internal Medicine, Federico II university of Naples, *via* Sergio Pansini 5, Napoli 80100, Italy. fazio0502@gmail.com

**Received:** October 24, 2022

**Revised:** November 7, 2022

**Accepted:** December 23, 2022

**Published online:**

**Abstract**

The goals of global vaccination are to control, eliminate, or eradicate infectious diseases in a sustainable way that strengthens public health systems. Although the use of vaccines is essential for the control of epidemics, the vaccines against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) proved to be inadequate to end the pandemic and thus are considered incomplete. These vaccines failed to prevent infection, so their primary purpose has been shifted to prevent severe disease and reduce hospitalizations and deaths. Therefore, we believe that all the strategies available to reduce transmission, hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 will be put in place. It is reported that uncontrolled inflammation and thrombosis are the principal mechanisms for aggravation and death in patients with COVID-19. Unlike corticosteroids that should not be administered at the beginning of the symptoms for their immunosuppressive action, which could worsen the evolution of the disease, the usefulness of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs in the early at-home treatment of the disease is becoming evident.

**Key Words:** Vaccination; Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; COVID-19; Early Treatment; Indomethacin; Hospitalizations

Fazio S, Affuso F. Opinion on double strategy to fight against COVID-19: Vaccination and home treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. *World J Meta-Anal* 2022; In press

**Core Tip:** The goals of global vaccination are to control, eliminate, or eradicate infectious diseases in a sustainable way that strengthens public health systems. Although the use of vaccines is essential for the control of epidemics, the vaccines against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) proved to be inadequate to end the pandemic and thus are considered incomplete. These vaccines failed to prevent infection, so their primary purpose now has been shifted to prevent severe disease and reduce hospitalizations and deaths. Therefore, we believe that all the strategies available to reduce transmission, hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 will be put in place. In this regard, many observational studies have constantly shown beneficial effects of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in patients with low to moderate degree of COVID-19, in particular when administered within the first 72 h of symptom onset. Randomized controlled studies with NSAIDs should be carried out as soon as possible to confirm these results.

**INTRODUCTION**

In a recent article regarding coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccinations, the authors stated that “current vaccines provide only modest protection against infection and transmission with omicron variant, even at peak immunity after boosting”, that “boosting every 4 to 6 mo to maintain high serum neutralizing antibody titers may not be a practical or desirable long-term strategy” and that “boosting with mRNA vaccines is not risk free”[1].

The goals of global vaccination are to control, eliminate, or eradicate infectious diseases in a sustainable way that strengthens public health systems. Although the use of vaccines is essential for the control of epidemics, the vaccines against COVID-19 proved to be inadequate to end the pandemic and thus are considered incomplete. These vaccines failed to prevent infection, so their primary purpose has been shifted to prevent severe disease and reduce hospitalizations and deaths. Therefore, we suggest that all the strategies available to reduce transmission, hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 should be put in place.

**AT-HOME EARLY TREATMENT WITH NSAIDS**

At the beginning of pandemic, we proposed that it is not ethical to leave the patients with COVID-19 without any treatment, waiting certainties to be established by evidence-based medicine, and, among the various drugs that we could have used, we have proposed the use of indomethacin for its peculiar mechanisms[2]. At present we suggest that vaccination and early at-home pharmacologic treatment should be used together to fight against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection. Pharmacologic treatment is simple and cheap, and should be carried out promptly at home worldwide, especially for the population with no access to vaccines and the expensive approved antivirals. It has been reported that uncontrolled inflammation and thrombosis are the principal mechanisms for aggravation and death in patients with COVID-19[3]. Unlike corticosteroids that should not be administered at the beginning of the symptoms for their immunosuppressive action, which could worsen the evolution of the disease, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are now indicated for the early at-home treatment of the disease. Unfortunately, at the beginning of pandemic, NSAIDs were discouraged because of fears that they would result in a worsened disease [4], but recently Perico *et al*[5], in their review published in Lancet Infectious Diseases have reported that NSAIDs, in particular selective anti-Cox2 drugs and indomethacin may be useful in the treatment of COVID-19. Indomethacin has anti-inflammatory, antiviral and anti-platelet properties[6]. It has shown a better efficacy in a randomized controlled study in comparison with paracetamol, by greatly reducing the percentage of patients with desaturation (Spo2 ≤ 93) in the course of the disease from 20% in the paracetamol group to 0% in the indomethacin group[7]. In addition, our group showed that treatment of COVID-19 patients with indomethacin plus cardioaspirin, started within the first 3 days of onset of symptoms led to a zero hospitalization, and reduced significantly the symptom duration and the number of patients who had increased D-dimer after polymerase chain reaction negativization and complete recovery in comparison with a group of patients who started the same treatment after 3 d[8].

In a further retrospective observational study, we confirmed the significant reduction of hospitalizations not only with indomethacin, but also with other NSAIDs, in a group of over 50 years old patients (mean age 60 ± 9 years) treated early at home for COVID-19[9].

Consolaro *et al*[10] have shown that a home-treatment algorithm based on anti-inflammatory drugs prevented hospitalization of patients with early COVID-19[10].

Another recent study by Cosentino *et al*[11], reporting the results of a retrospective analysis of 392 cases of COVID-19 in Italy, treated early at home mainly with NSAIDs, shows a very low number of hospitalizations (5.8%) and lethality (0.2%).

Taken together, these studies (Table 1), although most of them with an observational design, consistently indicate that prompt therapy at home with NSAIDs may be very beneficial in patients with mild to moderate COVID-19[5,7-11]. While several observational studies consistently showed the same beneficial result, prompt randomized controlled trials should be performed to validate the result. However, inexplicably, this was not done.

**CONCLUSION**

We hope that prospective randomized controlled trials on the efficacy of early at-home treatment with NSAIDs in patients with mild to moderate COVID-19, with a design of non-inferiority compared to the antiviral drugs currently authorized for treatment, will start as soon as possible. The demonstration of NSAIDs’ efficacy in the therapy of COVID-19 would make an extended use of these drugs which are easily accessible and cheap, thus greatly saving health care costs.

**REFERENCES**

1 **Barouch DH**. Covid-19 Vaccines - Immunity, Variants, Boosters. *N Engl J Med* 2022; **387**: 1011-1020 [PMID: 36044620 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMra2206573]

2 **Scotto Di Vetta M**, Morrone M, Fazio S. COVID-19: Off-Label therapies based on mechanism of action while waiting for evidence-based medicine recommendations. *World J Meta-Anal* 2020; **8:** 173-177 [DOI:10.13105/wjma.v8.i3.173]

3 **Sriram K**, Insel PA. Inflammation and thrombosis in COVID-19 pathophysiology: proteinase-activated and purinergic receptors as drivers and candidate therapeutic targets. *Physiol Rev* 2021; **101**: 545-567 [PMID: 33124941 DOI: 10.1152/physrev.00035.2020]

4 **Day M**. Covid-19: ibuprofen should not be used for managing symptoms, say doctors and scientists. *BMJ* 2020; **368**: m1086 [PMID: 32184201 DOI: 10.1136/bmj.m1086]

5 **Perico N**, Cortinovis M, Suter F, Remuzzi G. Home as the new frontier for the treatment of COVID-19: the case for anti-inflammatory agents. *Lancet Infect Dis* 2022 [PMID: 36030796 DOI: 10.1016/S1473-3099(22)00433-9]

6 **Fazio S**, Affuso F, Bellavite P. A Review of the Potential Roles of Antioxidant and Anti-Inflammatory Pharmacological Approaches for the Management of Mild-to-Moderate Symptomatic COVID-19. *Med Sci Monit* 2022; **28**: e936292 [PMID: 35256581 DOI: 10.12659/MSM.936292]

7 **Ravichandran R**, Mohan SK, Sukumaran SK, Kamaraj D, Daivasuga SS, Ravi SOAS, Vijayaraghavalu S, Kumar RK. An open label randomized clinical trial of Indomethacin for mild and moderate hospitalised Covid-19 patients. *Sci Rep* 2022; **12**: 6413 [PMID: 35440611 DOI: 10.1038/s41598-022-10370-1]

8 **Fazio S**, Bellavite P, Zanolin E, McCullough PA, Pandolfi S, Affuso F. Retrospective Study of Outcomes and Hospitalization Rates of Patients in Italy with a Confirmed Diagnosis of Early COVID-19 and Treated at Home Within 3 Days or After 3 Days of Symptom Onset with Prescribed and Non-Prescribed Treatments Between November 2020 and August 2021. *Med Sci Monit* 2021; **27**: e935379 [PMID: 34966165 DOI: 10.12659/MSM.935379]

9 **Fazio S,** Grimaldi S, D’Emilio M G, Mangiagalli A, Affuso F. COVID-19 early treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs reduces hospitalizations and symptom duration. *Am J Biomed Sci & Res* 2022; **16** [DOI: 10.34297/ajbsr.2022.16.002197]

10 **Consolaro E**, Suter F, Rubis N, Pedroni S, Moroni C, Pastò E, Paganini MV, Pravettoni G, Cantarelli U, Perico N, Perna A, Peracchi T, Ruggenenti P, Remuzzi G. A Home-Treatment Algorithm Based on Anti-inflammatory Drugs to Prevent Hospitalization of Patients With Early COVID-19: A Matched-Cohort Study (COVER 2). *Front Med (Lausanne)* 2022; **9**: 785785 [PMID: 35530041 DOI: 10.3389/fmed.2022.785785]

11 **Cosentino M**, Vernocchi V, Martini S, Marino F, Allasino B, Bàlzola MA, Burigana F, Dallari A, Pagano CSF, Palma A, Rango M, On Behalf Of IppocrateOrg Association Working Group For The Early Outpatient Treatment Of Covid-. Early Outpatient Treatment of COVID-19: A Retrospective Analysis of 392 Cases in Italy. *J Clin Med* 2022; **11** [PMID: 36294461 DOI: 10.3390/jcm11206138]

**Footnotes**

**Conflict-of-interest statement:** Flora Affuso and Serafino Fazio have no competing conflict of interest.

**Open-Access:** This article is an open-access article that was selected by an in-house editor and fully peer-reviewed by external reviewers. It is distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial (CC BY-NC 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, build upon this work non-commercially, and license their derivative works on different terms, provided the original work is properly cited and the use is non-commercial. See: https://creativecommons.org/Licenses/by-nc/4.0/

**Provenance and peer review:** Unsolicited article; Externally peer reviewed.

**Peer-review model:** Single blind

**Peer-review started:** October 24, 2022

**First decision:** November 2, 2022

**Article in press:**

**Specialty type:** Medicine, general and internal

**Country/Territory of origin:** Italy

**Peer-review report’s scientific quality classification**

Grade A (Excellent): 0

Grade B (Very good): B

Grade C (Good): C

Grade D (Fair): 0

Grade E (Poor): E

**P-Reviewer:** Barve P, United States; Laranjeira C, Portugal; Wijaya JH, Indonesia **S-Editor:** Liu JH **L-Editor:**  Ma JY **P-Editor:** Liu JH

**Table 1 Characteristics of published manuscripts on early at home treatment of coronavirus disease 2019 with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ref.** | **NSAID** | **Study design** |
| Fazio *et al*[8], 2021 | Indomethacin | Retrospective-observational |
| Perico *et al*[5], 2022 | Various | Review |
| Fazio *et al*[9], 2022 | Various | Retrospective-observational |
| Consolaro *et al*[10], 2022 | Various | Matched cohort |
| Ravichandran *et al*[7], 2022 | Indomethacin | Open label-randomized |
| Cosentino *et al*[11],2022 | Various | Retrospective-observational |

NSAID: Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.