

Tamiflu and Relenza not as effective in preventing and treating flu as previously thought

By ACSH Staff — April 10, 2014



The antiviral drugs Tamiflu and Relenza are often used for the

treatment of the flu in children and adults. Although past research has suggested that these drugs could reduce hospital admissions and complications related to the flu, the latest *Cochrane Review* published in the *BMJ*, [suggests otherwise](#) [1].

According to the research team, including Dr. Carl Heneghan of the University of Oxford in the UK and Dr. Peter Doshi of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, recommendations for the use of these drugs were based on a report released by the European Medicines Agency for the European CDC as well as on the findings reported from trials done by drug manufacturers such as GlaxoSmithKline. This new review, on the other hand, is based on clinical trial data including 20 internal reports on the effects of Tamiflu and 26 reports on the effects of Relenza, which include over 24,000 individuals.

Researchers found that Tamiflu cut the duration of flu symptoms by only half a day, compared to a placebo. Furthermore, it did not result in fewer hospitalizations or complications from the flu, and resulted in increased nausea and vomiting for both children and adults. In some cases, Tamiflu even prevented individuals from developing enough antibodies to fight the infection. The results were similar for Relenza.

Based on their findings, researchers conclude that the current recommendations regarding the use of Tamiflu and Relenza to fight the flu should be revised. Furthermore, they point out the importance of using clinical findings and regulator s comments as opposed to only published trials.

Dr. David Tovey, editor in chief at Cochrane says, Initially thought to reduce hospitalizations and complications from influenza, the review highlights that Tamiflu is not proven to do this, and it also seems to lead to harmful effects that were not fully reported in the original publications. This shows the importance of ensuring that trial data are transparent and accessible.

ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross adds, This study also highlights the importance of getting the flu shot each flu season. These drugs, once thought to be effective in prevention and treatment of the flu, are clearly not very effective, and it is imperative that individuals make sure to protect themselves

against this potentially fatal virus.

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[1] <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/275232.php>