

# Italy approves experimental Israeli drug used to treat hospitalized corona patients

The drug, called opaganib, was designed to have anti-cancer, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory properties. It has undergone testing but has yet to be approved for general use.



Magen David Adom workers wearing protective clothing as a preventive measure against the coronavirus evacuate a patient outside the new coronavirus unit at Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem on April 6, 2020. Photo by Nati Shohat/Flash90.

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(April 8, 2020 / JNS) The Israeli biopharmaceutical firm Redhill Biopharma has treated a coronavirus patient in Israel with an experimental drug that aims to lessen symptoms, following Italy's approval of its use, *The Jewish Chronicle* reported on Tuesday.

A coronavirus hospital patient with respiratory complaints was given the drug

following approval from Israel's Health Ministry under a compassionate-use program, which is when medical professionals treat patients with experimental drugs not as part of clinical trials, under special circumstances and with the approval of medical authorities.

The drug, called opaganib, has undergone testing but has yet to be approved for general use. It was designed to have anti-cancer, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory properties.

Opaganib is expected to be used on additional patients in Israel in the coming days and has already been tested on 131 people in the United States. Italy approved the use of the drug for approximately 160 patients across three hospitals in the northern part of the country, which has been particularly hard-hit, according to *The Jewish Chronicle*.

Dr. Mark Levitt, Redhill's medical director, noted that the compassionate-use program allows doctors in Italy "to treat patients at high risk of developing pneumonia and those with pneumonia, including acute respiratory distress syndrome, secondary to SARS-CoV-2 infection."

He added that "RedHill is working diligently to evaluate the potential of opaganib as a treatment for COVID-19 to help patients worldwide in urgent need of a treatment option."

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Source:

<https://www.jns.org/italy-approves-experimental-israeli-drug-used-to-treat-hospitalized-corona-patients/>

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