

NATIONAL

Emergency Use Authorization Granted by the FDA for Two New Drugs to Treat COVID-19

The advances that have been made in the management of the COVID-19 disease have been remarkable. There are multiple vaccines available that are among the most effective and the safest in medical history. There are also monoclonal antibody combination products that are effective for both the treatment and prevention of coronavirus infection. However, the continual emergence of mutant strains of the virus, that we refer to as variants, challenge the protection offered by vaccines and monoclonal antibody therapeutics.

Ideally, we should have antiviral drugs that can be taken as pills or tablets while at home to treat the infection or even prevent it. The one drug that is currently available, Remdesivir, is administered intravenously and is not a particularly potent treatment.

At the end of 2021, The Food and Drug Administration granted emergency use for two new drugs against the Sar-Cov-2 coronavirus, which is the cause of COVID-19.

Paxlovid is used as a combination of two drugs; nirmaltrevir and ritonavir. Nirmaltrevir, which does all the work in the combination, inhibits a critical protein of the coronavirus, the protease enzyme.

By inhibiting the protease, the drug prevents the replicating viruses from being able to assemble into new viruses (virions). This makes it impossible for the infection to spread throughout the body.

Ritonavir is an interesting part of this combination because it happens to be an HIV protease inhibitor. So why is it being used to

treat a COVID-19 infection? In this case, a low dose of ritonavir slows the rate at which our bodies break down the nirmaltrevir.

This keeps the concentration of the nirmaltrevir higher for a longer period so that it is more effective in fighting coronavirus. This is the same way it is used in HIV and Hepatitis C treatment.

Indeed, when this drug combo is administered to a person infected with COVID-19, the amount of coronavirus detected in nasal swabs falls dramatically and rapidly and can no longer be detected within a few days. In Phase II/Phase III clinical trials, when paxlovid was administered within 3 days of COVID-19 symptoms, the risk of hospitalization or death was reduced by almost 90%! If the drug was administered up to 5 days after the onset of COVID-19 symptoms, the benefit from the drug was reduced but still rather significant.

Molnupiravir is another oral treatment for COVID-19. When the coronavirus is copying its genetic material during replication, this drug forces lots of errors to be made, resulting in mutations.

This means the virus's proteins are totally screwed up and are useless, so no new viruses can be produced. The latest results of molnupiravir were less encouraging than the early results from clinical trials, but in the final results, the drug reduced the risk of hospitalization and death by 30%. The benefit from this drug also depended on getting treatment early. While not the "slam-dunk" we were hoping for, this drug could have a ben-



efit in improving COVID-19 outcomes.

One of the advantages of both these drugs is that, unlike the drug remdesivir, they are oral and do not have to be administered in a hospital or clinic. Your medical provider could call in a prescription to your pharmacy and you can start taking the drugs from home. Both are taken twice a day for five days.

Another advantage is that, unlike the monoclonal antibodies, these drugs should work against any of the variants, including Delta and Omicron. The Regeneron monoclonal antibody combo is effective against Delta but in laboratory studies, it has reduced activity against Omicron.

However, if you think these drugs are your escape from getting vaccinated, think again! Remember, just like with the monoclonal antibodies, both of these COVID-19 medications must be taken soon after the onset of symptoms to provide maximum benefit. You will need a medical provider to prescribe them and that may de-

pend on the results of a COVID-19 test.

It may not be as simple to get the prescription as it may seem. The next question is, are the drugs available in the local pharmacies? And who will pay for the medication; your medical insurance? Another consideration that is important is the potential for a drug-drug interaction with Paxlovid, if you are taking other medications, mainly due to the use of Ritonavir.

While these drugs could be game-changers in fighting the pandemic, the most practical and cost-effective way to combat COVID-19 is to prevent it with vaccination (vaccines are free for everyone). The prevention of diseases is always superior to treating them after they occur. (January 4, 2022 by Dr. Keith Crawford for Blackdoctor.org/Dr. Keith Crawford has over 25 years of experience in treatment of chronic infectious diseases, clinical and translational research.)

Kristen Hayden Becomes 1st Black Woman to Ever Win National Diving Title

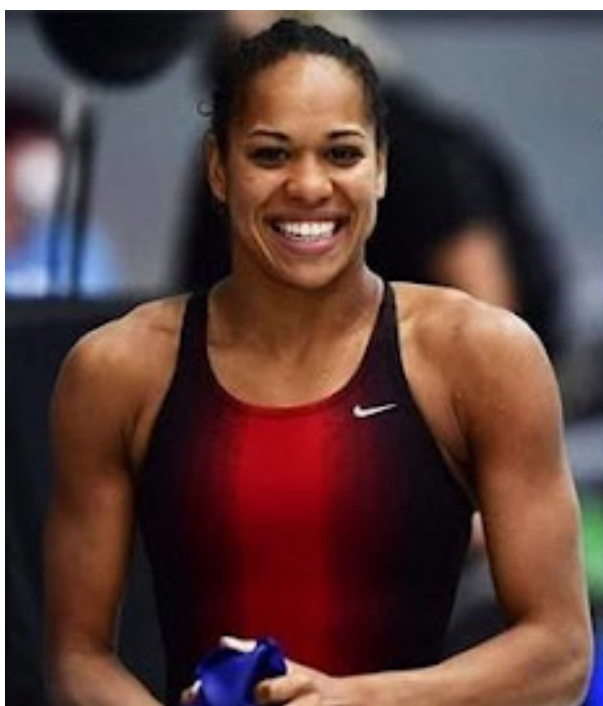
NATIONWIDE — Kristen Hayden, who hails from Hillsborough, New Jersey, makes history as the first Black woman to win a national diving title after recently securing her victory at the USA Diving Winter National Championships. What's more, she is the first Black American to earn a bid to the world championships!

Hayden paired with Quinn Henninger for the mixed synchronized 3-meter springboard competition. The duo took the lead on their third dive and earned 7.0s and 7.5s on their next two dives totaling a score of 286.86 points, just 3 points ahead of their competitors Carson Tyler and Anne Fowler.

Hayden is now one of the only two Black divers to win the U.S. national titles, joining Mike Wright who won on the 1-meter springboard in 2012.

"I don't think words can even describe the feeling," Hayden said in a statement. "You read about people like that, you watch Serena Williams, Simone Biles, Simone Manuel, but when it's yourself, it's insane. I think the whole diving community is headed in the right direction and I just want to be a good example for young Black Americans or any minority really for diving in the U.S."

She will go on to team up with Margo O'Meara for the 3-meter synchro competition



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and she will compete in the individual 1-meter and 3-meter events as well.

Hayden, who was a team member at the 2016 Junior Worlds Championships, is qualified for the World Championships in Japan next year, making her the first Black American to achieve the feat.

The 23-year old diver started the sport at the age of 10. She is currently enrolled at Indiana University. She is also a founding member of USA Diving's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council.

Rev. Lawson, cont'd.

A champion of nonviolent activism, Lawson helped organize sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters in downtown Nashville after coming to Vanderbilt Divinity School as a transfer student in 1958. His participation in the sit-ins led to his expulsion from Vanderbilt in 1960 following a vote by the executive committee of the university's Board of Trust—a move that generated national headlines and prompted some faculty members to resign in protest. Eventually, Vanderbilt and Lawson reconciled, and in 1996 he received the Vanderbilt Divinity School's first Distinguished Alumni/ae Award.

Lawson returned to Vanderbilt as a Distinguished Professor, teaching from 2006 to 2009. In 2007, the James M. Lawson Jr. Chair at Vanderbilt was established in his honor. He donated a significant portion of his papers to the Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries' Special Collections in 2013, and a scholarship for undergraduate students at Vanderbilt was named in his honor in 2018.

This year, Vanderbilt also launched the James Lawson Institute for the Research and Study of Nonviolent Movements, which carries forward his work through leadership development and the study of nonviolent strategies.

"This is a beautiful moment for Nashville as it acknowledges, in a public way, Rev. Lawson's commitment to bringing about needed social change and the enduring nature of his message," said Phillis Isabella Sheppard, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Associate Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture and director of the James Lawson Institute. "This honor is well-deserved and I join with others in celebrating it."

Black Family With Newborn Baby to Sue Airline After Being Kicked Off Flight

NATIONWIDE — A family from Philadelphia that was forced to disembark their American Airlines flight with their 7-month old baby says they are planning to pursue legal actions against the company.

Allan Ali, his partner Kamia Hoilett, and their newborn daughter were traveling home to Philadelphia on an American Airlines flight from Charlotte, North Carolina when the incident happened.

In a now-viral video, a flight attendant can be seen having an argument with them while Hoilett was holding their baby. Via the audio, the family was being instructed to get their belongings and exit

the flight.

The verbal altercation apparently started when the couple got out of their seats to let a white male passenger, who came late, to get to his seat. The man was accompanied by a flight attendant as he walked by the aisle. Ali said he recalled the flight attendant aggressively telling them, "Y'all have to get up."

They obliged but because the attendant was blocking the aisle, they could not move. When Hoilett asked if she could move to allow extra room, the attendant apparently replied, "Is this going to be a problem?"

The flight attendant contin-

ued treating them rudely, ordering them to sit down and fasten their seatbelt, which prompted Kamia to tell the attendant that she didn't like how she spoke to her. That's when the attendant stormed off to report the issue to the captain.

The family was removed from the flight right before departure, as per the captain's decision. They were rebooked on a later flight, which was a big inconvenience as they had to wait at the airport for several hours while tending for their newborn baby.

Allan said they will file an official complaint regarding the unfair treatment they experienced.

Meanwhile, the American Airlines issued a statement saying they are "actively looking" into the incident, according to Travel Noire.

"Our values demand that all customers are treated fairly and with respect, and we find the video posted by the family concerning. We have reached out to the customers involved to understand their experience, and are seeking additional information from other passengers on board and team members who were present. This matter has our full attention, and we will take appropriate action as necessary," it said.