Is Plaquenil Safe for Rheumatoid Arthritis? Real Benefits vs Side Effects Explained Transcript

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Introduction to Plaquenil

Have you ever been handed a prescription for a medication you have never heard of and immediately gone home to Google it? If you had rheumatoid arthritis, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

And if your doctor has ever mentioned a drug called Plaquenil, also known as hydroxychloroquine, and you might have typed that word in the Google search bar and your heart was racing, Today, I want to walk you through exactly what this medication, the hydroxychloroquine or Plaquenil does, why your doctors prescribe it, what the real risks are, and why it may be one of the most underrated tools in all rheumatology.

Hi all of you rheumatoid arthritis warrior, this is Dr. Ananda Subedi at The Room Doc and let's learn more about plaque on ill today. Let's start with the story of Maria.

She is 42 years old and when she noticed her hand felt different every single morning, she was worried. Every morning she wakes up, her hands are stiff.

Maria's RA Diagnosis Story

she wasn't able to close her she told herself it was stress maybe she slept wrong she pushed through it for many months she took ibuprofen was soaking her hand in the warm water with the hope that it will feel better until one day she could not even close her hands she was feeling so much pain she wasn't even able to tie the shoelaces of her daughter finally she decided to see a rheumatologist And when she sat in front of the rheumatologist, she was hit hard with the diagnosis, the Diagnosis of Rheumatoid Artifitis.

And her doctor recommended her to take this medication, The hydroxychloroquine or Plaquenil. You can imagine Maria's first reaction. She went home and she googled it.

She found a malaria drug for joint pain. she did more about eye problems, heart issues, and all of the other side effects that could come with Plaquenil.

And she was worried. The scientific list was endless. and she almost did not even feel that prescription. Marriott's story is like thousands of others rheumatoid arthritis warriors, and I want you to know that she did almost not feel her prescription, Marrriot's Story is Like Thousands of Others Who Are Suffering With Rheumataid Arthritis, And I Want You To Know what she did not know that day.

Before we go further, let's first understand what is rheumatoid arthritis. Let's understand What is happening in your body when you have rheuma to arthritis?

Think of your immune system as your bodies security team. Normally, it protects you. It fights off the bacteria, viruses, and anything that does not belong to your buddy.

But in rheu matter arthritis, that security teams get confused.

How Rheumatoid Arthritis Damages Joints

It starts attacking your own joints, the soft lining called synovium and the cartilages. And even it can cause bone damage underneath. This is called a friendly fire.

If nobody stops it, over time your joints pay the price. stiffness, swelling, pain and if left untreated permanent joint

damage. That's why we use medication called disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs or DMARD.

These don't just cover the pain like ibuprofen. They slow down the disease. They protect your joints. And Plaquenil is one of these disease-mortifying anti-rheumatic drugs.

Here is the best way I can describe what hydroxychloroquine or Plaquinil does in your body. Imagine, your immune system is a stereo blasting at full volume.

Some medications are like yanking the plug out of the wall. It shuts off everything. They are powerful but they shut down whole immune systems. Plaquenil is different.

Plaquely is like more like a volume knob. It turns the noise down to manageable level without silencing everything. it comes over reactive immune cells.it block the signals that keep inflammation going.

How Hydroxychloroquine Works

And here is the thing I love about this medication. It is not just about your joints. Research has shown three things about hydroxychloroquine that most patients don't know, and most of the internet doesn't tell you.

1. Cholesterol People who have rheumatoid arthritis who take Plaquenil have significantly better cholesterol levels. Lower bad cholesterol, higher good cholesterol.

2. Diabetes Risk A major review found that people on hydroxychloroquine has a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes. And the number 3 and that matter the most, your heart disease.

One of the study found hydroxylchloquine use was linked to fewer heart attacks and strokes. Now you might wonder why does this matter so much? Because the number one cause of death in people with rheumatoid arthritis is not our fight itself is the heart disease.

So a medication that treats your joints and help protect your heart, that is a big deal. That's why Plaquenil is so helpful in managing rheuma arthritis.

This question comes up a lot.

Benefits Beyond Joint Relief

Why does Rheumatologist actually reach for Plaquenil? There are three scenarios. Scenario number one, early mild disease. If you are newly diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and your RA is mild, the American College of Rhematology actually recommends Plaquinil as a first-line option.

And the reason is it is well tolerated, it has a favorable safety profile, and is easier to take the pill. Scenario number two, a combination therapy.

When methotrexate alone is not enough, rheumatologists can add a Plaquenil alongside Sulfasalazine. And this combination is called triple therapy that includes metotrexit, Salfasazin and Plaquinil.

scenario number three, the cost. Biologic medication, the newer, more expensive options can cost tens of thousands of dollars a year. And many of you who are living in other parts of the world, you may not have access to those medications.

But the triple threat with Plaquenil cost a fraction of that. For many patients, it worked just as well as other biologics. It is also cost effective, so easier to get anywhere throughout the world.

Now, let's talk about what Maria found on Google that scared her.

When Doctors Prescribe Plaquenil

First thing was the eyes, the side effect on the eye due to Plaquenil. And this is the most talked about risk with long term use of hydroxychloroquine is that retinal toxicity.

the potential damage to the back of the eye. And I want you to hear this very closely and clearly. At the correct dose, no more than 5 mg per kilogram of body weight per day, the risk of eye damage is less than 2%. That is even after 10 years of use.

The key is regular screening, a baseline eye examination when you start and annual screening after 5 years. If any early changes are caught, they stabilize once the medication stops.

The most common day-to-day side effects? Myelosia, which usually improves when you take it with food, and the serious side-effects are extremely rare.

Regular check-ins with your rheumatologist are what keeps you safe. Now let me come back to the triple therapy for a moment, because the number shares are remarkable.

methotrexate, sulfasalazine, and hydroxychloroquine. These three medications work together as a team.

Eye Safety and Common Side Effects

A landmark study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that 77% of the patients on triple therapy achieve major improvement. compare that to just 33% on methotrexate alone so 77 on triple therapy versus 33 percent just on meta trexite and these three pills the metho trexit, placonid and sulfasalazine they are affordable pills and work as powerful as a team compared to biologics.

And Plaquenil is a quite teammate in this triple therapy. Now you might be wondering what happened to Maria. She almost did not feel that prescription.

But after a long conversation with her rheumatologist, one where she asked every question she had been afraid of to ask, she decided to give it a try.

Within a few months, the morning stiffness started to ease. She could grip her coffee mug again. she could button her daughter's coat easily without any problem.

Triple Therapy Results

Later, after a couple of months she had another flare and her doctor added methotrexate and sulfasalazine on top of Plaquenil and within weeks of this triple therapy she felt the difference again to add more her cholesterol also improved Her rheumatologist told her, Plaquenil may be protecting her heart too, something she never expected from a rheuma arthritis pill.

Today, Maria is having a good control of her rheoma arthritis and she is enjoying her life and her time with the family. Now here is what I want you to take away from this video.

Plaquinil is not the loudest drug in this room of rhema arthritis. It is also not newest one or the flashiest one. But it has been helping people with rheumatoid arthritis for decades.

It gently calms the swelling and it protects your heart. And it works beautifully alongside with other medication as a good team player. All of you rheuma arthritis warrior, if you have been prescribed Plaquenil and you are nervous about it, I want you to do one thing.

Maria's Improvement and Takeaways

Have an honest conversation with your rheumatologist. Ask every question you are afraid to ask. That conversation could change everything on how you manage your Rheumatoid Arthritis.

And as we know, early treatment changes outcome in rheuma atrophitis. Don't let fear make the decisions for you. If this video helped you, please subscribe to our channel.

Please like this Video and share with other people who might be scared with Plaquenil. We are working together getting the right information to RA patients everywhere you need it.

Please leave a comment below. What question do you have about Claconil or any other RA treatment? And I read those every single one and I'll see you in the next video.

Bye bye.