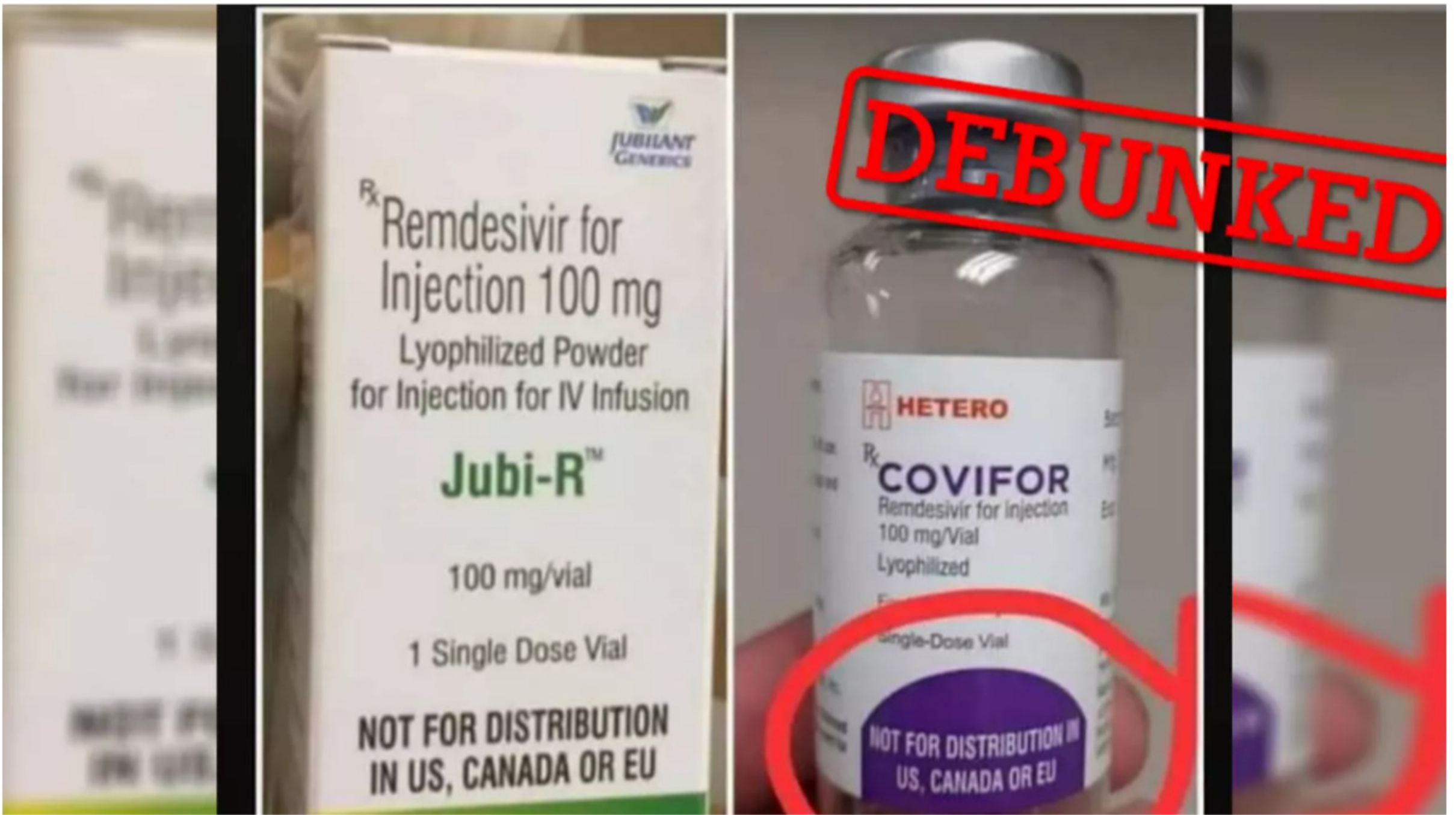


INTOX

Debunked: This drug is not a Covid-19 vaccine being tested in Africa

    3K shares

Issued on: 23/09/2020 - 17:11 Modified: 24/09/2020 - 20:54



Social media users claim that the presence of this medication in Africa – even though it hasn't been authorised for testing in Europe or the United States – is proof that medication is being tested on different continents.

🕒 4 min

Since early September, social media users across Africa have been sharing posts showing a medication called Covifor with a label in English that says “Not for distribution in the United States, Canada and the European Union”. Many have claimed that this label is proof that the Global North is testing vaccines against Covid-19 in the developing world. It turns out, however, that this info is wrong. Firstly, Covifor isn't a vaccine against Covid. Secondly, it actually is distributed in several European countries.

The photo of the Covifor label has mostly been circulating on social media in several French- and English-speaking countries in Africa. “Wake up Afrika, this is not a cure but a trap to kill you or use you as 'laboratory rat'”, reads a tweet by a self-proclaimed pan-Africanist account.

A Facebook page also claiming to be “pan-Africanist” shared the same image along with a caption stating that it is a “racist vaccination”.

[#Africa must Wake Up](#) 🤔???? pic.twitter.com/qhnaucdoT5

GPAN (@AfricaRepublic) September 2, 2020

“Under apartheid, many things were 'reserved for Whites only'. Now we are trying to get the same result by implying that something is 'reserved for Africans only'”, reads a post about this image in [Babilown blog](#), whose administrator is a Beninois citizen living in exile in France.

Most of these posts didn't get a lot of shares. However, many did generate angry comments about how Covid-19 vaccinations were being tested in Africa, a popular conspiracy theory that circulates widely on social media in Africa, often with some kind of images providing evidence for the claims.

Covifor: what is it?

Covifor is a real medication. As you can see on the label, it is manufactured by the Indian pharmaceutical company Hetero Drugs. There are several [documents](#) on their website about Covifor, which explain:

“Covifor is the first generic brand of Remdesivir which is indicated for the treatment of COVID19 patients in adults and children, hospitalised with severe symptoms of the disease. The drug is available in 100 mg vial (Injectable). It needs to be administered intravenously in a hospital, critical care setting, under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner”.

This medication [has been sold](#) in India since June and costs between 5,000 and 6,000 rupees (€57-68) for 100mg.

'It is in no way a vaccine'

Our FRANCE 24 Observers team spoke to a representative at Hetero Drugs who said that his colleagues in Zimbabwe had seen this image circulating online and had warned him.:

“

This is in no way a preventative medication or a vaccine, but a treatment meant to ease the symptoms of those seriously ill with Covid-19 during their hospitalisation.

Last May, Hetero signed a licencing agreement with Gilead Sciences Inc [Editor's note: the American laboratory that makes Remdesivir] to make and distribute Remdesivir. The agreement authorises Hetero to distribute the generic in 127 countries, as long as they provide regulatory approval.

The label "Not for distribution in the United States, Canada and the European Union" is to prevent the drug from being sold illegally on the black market.

We think that this photo is part of a malicious campaign to create confusion around this drug.

”

Gilead's licensing agreement allows low and low-to-middle income countries to have access to healthcare, according to the company website. In summary, the agreement is meant to keep the price of the drug affordable in the poorest countries and also make sure it can be manufactured as quickly as possible.

The [list of countries covered in the Gilead agreement](#) doesn't include Canada, the United States or any EU member country. It does include some European countries like Georgia, Armenia and Belarus.

Remdesivir sold in Europe and the United States

So even though Covifor, the Remdesivir generic that is manufactured in India, isn't sold in the EU or the United States, Remdesivir is authorised in both locations.

In July, the EU announced that it had signed a €63 million contract to make Remdesivir available in its 27 member states. The medication will be provided [to 30,000 patients with severe symptoms of Covid-19](#). The European Agency of Medicines recommends it for adults and adolescents over the age of 12 who are suffering from pneumonia and need supplemental oxygen.

In the United States, health authorities stocked up on hydroxychloroquine before announcing that they had acquired 92 percent of Remdesivir production between July and September, which translates to 500,000 treatments. The manufacturer, Gilead, fixed the price at \$390 dollars per bottle, equivalent to €328, in all developing countries.

CORONAVIRUS