**THE TIMELINE OF A SCANDAL**

Surgisphere Corporation had a few busy months in 2020, overseeing the launch of a new website, the publication of high-impact papers on treatments and outcomes in COVID-19 patients, and eventually a collapse of its reputation.

**MARCH 26**

Surgisphere announces the development of a set of COVID-19 diagnostic tools in collaboration with the nonprofit African Federation for Emergency Medicine (AFEM) to help clinicians in low-resource areas.

**FEB 10**

Facing at least three medical malpractice lawsuits, Sapan Desai leaves Northwest Community Hospital. He and the hospital later say he left for personal reasons.

**MARCH 6**

Desai and four coauthors publish a paper in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) about the association between cardiovascular disease, COVID-19 mortality, and the hospital later say he left for personal reasons.

**MAY 28**

The Lancet reports that the number of COVID-19 hospital admissions and deaths reported in the Lancet study as coming from Australia does not match official records.

**MAY 1**

Desai and four coauthors publish a paper in The Lancet online reporting that the French government reversed a decision that allowed hospitals to prescribe hydroxychloroquine to COVID-19 patients.

**MAY 30**

The Lancet posts a correction notice on the hydroxychloroquine paper noting that the study authors have updated the paper to remove the discrepancies in the Australian data and to present raw rather than adjusted data. The journal states that the study’s conclusions remain unchanged.

**MAY 5**

The ARFM issues a statement withdrawing its recommendation of the COVID-19 diagnostic tools developed in collaboration with Surgisphere,and that plans for a clinical trial to test them. AFEM founder Lee Wallis tells The Scientist the nonprofit will work through the end of the year to develop, test, and roll out a replacement.

**MAY 7**

Researchers at ISGlobal in Barcelona write to all 19 hospital admissions and deaths reported in the study as coming from Australia do not match official records. Researchers start sounding the alarm over the possibility that the study's data sources and analysis.

**MAY 23-24**

Over the weekend, epidemiologists and statisticians question the Lancet study’s data and its conclusions on social media and in blog posts. Researchers start sending letters to the journal’s editor, Richard Horton, expressing concerns about the study’s data sources and analyses.

**MAY 11**

More than 100 researchers sign an open letter to the Lancet’s editors calling for a full retraction of the study as well as a formal investigation of Surgisphere’s database.

**JUNE 7**

The Lancet retracts the paper noting that there is a lack of clinical evidence of ivermectin’s efficacy in COVID-19 patients and that the drug should not be used to treat the disease. Still, many Latin American countries now recommend ivermectin as prophylaxis in healthcare workers.

**JUNE 12**

Surgisphere’s website is suspended.

**JUNE 19**

The Pan American Health Organization, a regional office of the WHO, circulates a document warning that there is a lack of clinical evidence of ivermectin’s efficacy in COVID-19 patients and that the drug should not be used to treat the disease. Still, many Latin American countries now recommend ivermectin as prophylaxis.

**JUNE 20**

Surgisphere reports that the number of COVID-19 hospital admissions and deaths reported in the Lancet study as coming from Australia does not match official records.

**JUNE 26**

MHRA allows COPCOV to resume recruitment to its trial of hydroxychloroquine as prophylaxis in healthcare workers.

**MAY 1**

More than 100 researchers sign an open letter to the Lancet study authors and to the journal, listing 16 serious concerns about the paper’s data sources and analysis.

**MAY 27**

The French government reverses a decision that allowed hospitals to prescribe hydroxychloroquine to COVID-19 patients.

**MAY 31**

The ARFM issues a statement withdrawing its recommendation of the COVID-19 diagnostic tools developed in collaboration with Surgisphere, and that plans for a clinical trial to test them. AFEM founder Lee Wallis tells The Scientist the nonprofit will work through the end of the year to develop, test, and roll out a replacement.

**MAY 8**

The original ivermectin preprint is replaced on SSRN with a second version that contains different patient numbers but draws the same conclusion about ivermectin’s link to patient survival.

**JUNE 2**

A second paper, this time addressed to NEJM, and the authors on that study, details further discrepancies in Surgisphere’s database evident from this paper.

**APRIL 19**

The original ivermectin preprint is replaced on SSRN with a second version that contains different patient numbers but draws the same conclusion about ivermectin’s link to patient survival.

**MAY 26**

The World Health Organization (WHO) announces the suspension of recruitment to the hydroxychlo- roquine testing arm of the interna- tional Solidarity Trial, which aims to find treatments for hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

**MAY 31**

The Lancet posts a correction notice on the hydroxychloroquine paper noting that the study authors have updated the paper to remove the discrepancies in the Australian data and to present raw rather than adjusted data. The journal states that the study’s conclusions remain unchanged.

**MAY 20**

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