

***Combatting Disinformation:* Democracy Forward Supports Medical Ethics & Expertise in COVID-19 Treatment**

Medical professionals, including physicians, have an ethical and legal obligation to provide evidence-based care for their patients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation related to the use of ivermectin (a drug approved by the FDA for the treatment of conditions caused by parasites) as a treatment for COVID-19 infections has spread and caused some to self-medicate with livestock-grade ivermectin.

In Wisconsin, Democracy Forward recently represented the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Wisconsin Medical Society (WisMed) in filing a friend of the court brief with the Wisconsin Supreme Court, in support of Aurora Health Care, Inc., a hospital that was sued when its physicians refused to administer an ivermectin prescription to a COVID-19 patient.

Aurora's physicians refused to administer ivermectin to the patient, who eventually cleared his COVID-19 infection and was discharged without receiving any ivermectin, because it falls below the standard of care for treating COVID-19. The FDA, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization all advise against the use of ivermectin to treat COVID-19, outside of clinical trials.

The AMA and WisMed's brief advises the court not to compel physicians to administer substandard treatments like ivermectin for COVID-19 patients, as doing so would force Wisconsin's physicians into the untenable position of having "to choose between the law and their ethical duties, potentially exposing patients to harm and physicians to liability."

For almost three years, physicians represented by the AMA and WisMed have treated approximately 2 million Wisconsinites for COVID-19, a task made all the more complicated by misinformation about viable treatments for COVID-19. The patient in this case has argued that the hospital's refusal to administer ivermectin to him constituted substandard medical care. However, as our brief on behalf of medical professionals makes clear, the standard of care in Wisconsin does not require physicians to provide treatment that available medical evidence suggests will not benefit patients and may actually harm them.

The lawsuit is on appeal before the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The appeal follows a trial court order directing Aurora Health Care to administer ivermectin to a patient and an appellate court's subsequent reversal of that order. The Wisconsin Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on January 17, 2023.

As we work to combat disinformation, it is critical to make the case for science and evidence-based medical practice in the courts. If you have questions or want to learn more, email Breanne Palmer, Senior Legal Policy Advisor at bpalmer@democracyforward.org.