Two presumptive positive cases at Augusta University Health System

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AUGUSTA, Ga. (March 16, 2020) – An employee and the spouse of an employee are presumptively positive for COVID-19 according to initial testing performed at Augusta University Health System. The results await confirmation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The safety of our patients and employees is our top priority,” said AU Health CEO Katrina Keefer. “We’ve been preparing for months and are working quickly to identify anyone who may have come in contact with these individuals to determine their risk and limit further exposure.”

The health system is working in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Public Health to ensure best practices are followed when treating patients with COVID-19 and those who may be at risk for exposure.

Keefer said the risk to patients and visitors remains low and cites preventive steps taken by the health system to further reduce exposure, such as activating the hospital’s Incident Command Center, strengthening visitation restrictions, and closing some hospital entrances and screening people upon entry.

She also encourages those who are sick or show symptoms of COVID-19 to use the health system’s new remote screening tool, available for free on the website and as a mobile app for Apple and Android, or to call the health system COVID-19 hotline at 706-721-1852.

“We knew early on that the way to decrease the spread of illness was to limit the number of people in our emergency department,” she said. “Now it’s more important than ever that we screen patients remotely, without having them risk exposure or spread unnecessarily.”

AU Health officials continue to emphasize guidance from the CDC about when to seek help from medical professionals, which currently recommends calling ahead to a health care professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread. People who are mildly ill and who do not have relevant travel history and/or known exposure to a patient with COVID-10 are asked to stay home, except for needing medical care.

As the area’s regional coordinating hospital and home to some of the nation’s leading infectious disease experts, AU Health has partnered with the Georgia Department of Public Health to
respond to many infectious diseases and our protocols are designed to protect the entire community, while providing support and resources to anyone who may have been exposed.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the outbreak continues to expand and as testing capacity in the U.S. increases, more cases are expected to be detected across the country, including more instances of person-to-person spread in more states.

If you have questions or need assistance, we encourage you to consult our website, the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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