Augusta University Health administers
first COVID-19 vaccine to frontline caregivers

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AUGUSTA, Ga. (Dec. 17, 2020) – Augusta University Health is among the first health care systems in Georgia to administer the COVID-19 vaccine after receiving its shipment of 975 doses Thursday, Dec. 17.

AU Health administered its initial doses of the Pfizer brand vaccine to 10 caregivers during a press conference Thursday, and those who receive the vaccine will get a second dose about three weeks later as part of Pfizer's vaccine protocols. The first vaccine is considered the "prime" dose and the second one is a "booster."

Augusta University President Brooks A. Keel, PhD, says the COVID-19 vaccine is a turning point in this public health crisis and considers it a privilege to offer the first wave of the vaccine to its AU heroes.

"With the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine, I feel we have reached a milestone in our work to end this pandemic," said Keel. "Our caregivers are on the front lines daily battling this deadly virus, and we are grateful to be at a point to offer them this additional protection. This is another step forward for our health system and in helping slow the spread of the virus in our community."

AU Health will store the vaccine in freezers that stay at -80 degrees Celsius, and the vaccine must be used within six hours of being removed from the cold.

Pfizer found the vaccine was 95% effective in preventing the disease among trial volunteers who had no evidence of prior coronavirus infection and no serious safety concerns were observed, the company stated last month. There were also only mild side effects associated with the Pfizer vaccine.

"It is an honor for AU Health to take part in this moment in history, and our team has been working hard to prepare to distribute the vaccine in an orderly and safe manner," said Katrina

Keefer, executive vice president for health affairs at Augusta University and chief executive officer for AU Health. "I have witnessed the dedication of our caregivers on the front lines of this pandemic, and I'm grateful we can do our part to keep them safe."

As of now, there is no word on when AU Health will begin offering the vaccine to the general public. However, approximately 1.3 billion doses of the Pfizer vaccine are expected to be distributed worldwide by the end of 2021.

From the onset of the pandemic, AU Health has been a regional leader in the battle against COVID-19. Whether it is efforts to expand coronavirus screening and testing across the state by teaming up with Georgia National Guard and the Georgia Department of Public Health or becoming one of the first hospitals in the state to offer convalescent plasma transfusions, AU Health has worked hard to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Learn more on how AU Health plans to distribute the vaccine and get the latest information on AU Health's coronavirus resources.

DOWNLOAD: View an image and download video of the Augusta University Health caregivers receiving the COVID-19 vaccination during AU Health's press conference on Thursday, Dec. 17.

Download video of the shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine arriving at AU Health Thursday, Dec. 17, and get an image of an Augusta University Health representative transporting the vaccine to a secured storage area.

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AU Health is Georgia's only public academic health center, where world-class clinicians are bringing the medicine of tomorrow to patient care today. As the primary teaching affiliate of the Medical College of Georgia, AU Health provides the most comprehensive routine-to-complex care at AU Medical Center, which houses the region's only Level 1 trauma center, as well as Children's Hospital of Georgia, historic Roosevelt warm Springs Rehabilitation and Specialty Hospitals, Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home, and more than 100 primary and specialty care clinics across the state.

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