



**Colquitt Regional Cuts Ribbon on Geropsychiatric Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit**

**MOULTRIE, Ga.** – Colquitt Regional Medical Center recently cut the ribbon on its new Geropsychiatry Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit (BHU). The focus of this new service line is to provide short-term intensive treatment for elderly patients who suffer from acute psychiatric disorders, cognitive impairment, and age-related physiological disabilities.

Patients who are admitted will benefit from a comprehensive line of treatments offered in the BHU, such as extensive evaluation and assessment, individual treatment planning, individual and family therapy, group therapy (occupational and activity), medication management, discharge planning, outreach and referral for aftercare, and family and caregiver support.

The unit, which is located on the second floor of the hospital, houses 10 beds, four semi-private and two private. It will largely serve the 55+ population and aims to help patients regain and maintain their optimal level of health. More specifically, this unit will benefit patients who suffer from depression, anxiety, grief, coping challenges, or emotional disturbances.

“Over the past several years, it has become evident that this service is greatly needed for our community,” said Colquitt Regional President and CEO Jim Matney. “Until now, patients with geriatric psychiatry needs had to transfer to neighboring facilities to receive the necessary level of care. Now, patients in our community have the option to stay right here in their hometown and still receive the same exceptional care.”

The dire need for increased access to mental health services in rural areas, coupled with increasing numbers of the geriatric population have been major driving forces for the implementation of these services. According to the National Institutes of Health, the 65+ population is projected to almost double by 2050, growing from 48 million to 88 million.

This new unit is only one of several recent additions to Colquitt Regional's psychiatry services. In 2020, Sterling Physician Group added its first psychiatrist to its medical staff. In 2021, the hospital opened an intensive outpatient program, Sterling Group Senior Wellness, that focuses on providing treatment in a group setting to adults who are experiencing depression, anxiety, and emotional problems, among others. On June 14, Georgia South Graduate Medical Education welcomed its first set of psychiatry residents and will train them to become independent psychiatrists over the next four years, in hopes of creating a new pipeline of mental health physicians for the region.

"We are constantly evaluating our services and how we can continue meeting the needs of our patients and community members," said Hospital Authority Chairman Richard E. Turner, Jr. "With the addition of these psychiatric service lines, we are able to provide a greater continuum of care, ranging from acute inpatient care and intensive outpatient treatment to follow-ups with Dr. Verma and his staff."

Colquitt Regional's BHU is led by Sterling Physician Group psychiatrist Teron Verma, MD, who serves as medical director, and Director of Behavior Health Melissa Bennett, MSN, RN.

The BHU was made possible through the support of 2021 Georgia HEART tax credit donations and several signature naming donations to Colquitt Regional Medical Foundation. This includes a donation of \$250,000 by Colquitt Regional employees, a \$110,000 gift by the Colquitt Regional Volunteers, and a generous donation of \$25,000 by Mr. and Mrs. Victor Beadles.

For more information, please contact Melissa Bennett at 229-891-9194.

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Caption: Colquitt Regional recently cut the ribbon on its geropsychiatry inpatient behavioral health unit (BHU). Pictured behind the blue ribbon, from left, is BHU Medical Director and Sterling Physician Group psychiatrist Teron Verma, MD, BHU Director Melissa Bennett, MSN, RN, Assistant Vice President of Nursing Toni Riddle, RN, CEN, Colquitt Regional President and CEO Jim Matney, and Colquitt Regional Medical Foundation Chairman Beth Bates. Others pictured include BHU staff members and Colquitt Regional employees and volunteers.