



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New COVID-19 Treatment Shows Promising Results for Phoebe Patients

Albany, Ga. – “Please, everybody out there, wear a mask. Please, wear a mask.” That was Alvin Moment’s plea to southwest Georgians as he sat in an outpatient infusion room at Phoebe North receiving an experimental treatment for COVID-19.

Moment is a mechanic in Mitchell County and regrets he did not always wear a mask on the job. A week before he ended up at Phoebe North, he began experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. “I’ve been having chest pains. My head has been hurting really, really bad, and my body’s been aching all over – just unbearable pain. I wouldn’t want nobody to have this,” Moment said. He also suffered other common COVID-19 symptoms such as loss of taste and shortness of breath.

Unfortunately, the person closest to him contracted the virus as well. A couple of days after Moment got sick, his wife developed symptoms. “Are you okay, baby,” Mr. Moment asked Joceyln Moment as nurses brought him into the infusion room with her so they could receive their therapy together. Because of their health history and the fact they were diagnosed with COVID-19 early in their illness, a physician referred them for this new treatment. “My husband and I went to the emergency room, and they recommended that we come and try this because we’re both diabetic,” Mrs. Moment said.

The monoclonal antibody treatment is approved for a small subset of referred COVID-19 patients, and it has shown outstanding early success at Phoebe. In early January, Phoebe began utilizing the therapy to treat mild to moderate COVID-19 in patients at high risk of progressing to severe illness from the virus. “These are outpatient intravenous infusion treatments that are administered over several hours. The treatment may be appropriate for patients who have co-morbidities or are at least 65 whose illness has not progressed to a level that would require them to be hospitalized or to be prescribed oxygen therapy. So far, we are exceedingly pleased with the level of success we are seeing,” said Dianna Grant, MD, Phoebe Putney Health System Chief Medical Officer.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued emergency use authorization for two versions of monoclonal antibody treatment – bamlanivimab and a combination of casirivimab and imdevimab. While the FDA continues to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the therapies, they have shown in clinical trials to reduce COVID-19-related hospitalizations and emergency room visits in patients at high risk of disease progression.

“We are administering both therapies at Phoebe North and one of them at Phoebe Sumter. Patients must be referred by a physician and go through an initial screening to ensure they are appropriate patients for the treatment. We are working with community physicians and our emergency center physicians so that when they identify patients they believe would benefit from the therapy, we are able to provide the service quickly to those patients,” Dr. Grant said.

The FDA describes monoclonal antibodies as “laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system’s ability to fight off harmful antigens such as viruses.” The antibodies used in these treatments are specifically directed against a protein that is part of this coronavirus, and they are designed to prevent the virus from attaching to and entering human cells. According to the FDA, there are currently no other adequate, approved and available COVID-19 treatments for the authorized population.

Many of the patients treated by Phoebe have shown significant and rapid improvement in their symptoms. Thankfully, that is the case for the Moments. “The next day, I felt like a champ. The medicine went right to work,” Mr. Moment said. “I still have a little bit of a cough. Other than that, I feel much better,” Mrs. Moment added.

Three days after their treatment, their taste was returning, and the Moments were looking forward to returning to life as normal. “I’m doing great,” Mr. Moment said. “I’m on my second cup of coffee this morning. I’m so glad we got that treatment.”

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Attached photos show Alvin and Joycelyn Moment receiving monoclonal antibody therapy Friday afternoon at Phoebe North.



