For Immediate Release

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Bringing Intensive Care to Rural Areas…Virtually
New Program Brings Virtual ICUs to Hospitals in Baldwin, Monroe, Peach Counties

MACON, GA (Monday, June 8, 2020) – Access to health services is difficult for many Georgians, particularly those in rural areas of the state. Many Georgians have to travel long distances from home to access basic medical services. When the need is critical, accessing the proper level of care can become even more challenging.

Navicent Health understands that accessing appropriate care close to home is an essential need for all Georgians. Over the past seven years, Navicent Health has worked closely with hospitals and hospital authorities in Baldwin, Monroe and Peach Counties to ensure local residents maintain access to local care. Now, through its collaboration with Atrium Health, Navicent Health is bringing intensive care services to those same counties through Atrium Health’s Virtual Critical Care (VCC) platform. Through VCC, intensive care services will be expanded at Navicent Health Baldwin and will be offered at Medical Center of Peach County and Monroe County Hospital for the very first time.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Navicent Health and Atrium Health anticipated the launch of VCC in central Georgia in 2021. However, due to the anticipated need of ICU beds for COVID-19 care, the two collaborative partners chose to move forward with the launch.

“Now more than ever, our ability to deliver high-quality healthcare in each community we serve is critical. Our ability to provide the safest therapies through leading technologies will allow us to fully support the healthcare needs of the region during, and long after, the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Tom Oliver, MD, President of Hospitals and Clinics, Navicent Health.

How Does VCC Work?
Healthcare providers at Medical Center of Peach County, Monroe County Hospital and Navicent Health Baldwin are now able to access real-time critical care support through high definition video and two-way audio. The VCC platform provides instant access 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to more than 80 board certified tele-intensivists, 40 board certified critical care nurses, critical care certified pharmacists and respiratory therapists.

Care providers at the three Georgia hospitals may consult with VCC intensivists to make evidence-based decisions for the benefit of the critically ill patients. The platform’s quick response programming allows the VCC provider to remotely examine the patient, review vital signs and EKG tracings; examine settings on IV pumps and ventilators; and communicate directly with the patient if the patient is able.

VCC clinicians are also available to consult with local care providers on medication therapies and management, and visually analyze the patient’s response to treatment.
“This additional layer of critical care expertise and real-time communication will allow local bedside clinicians to provide critical care close to home, rather than transferring their patients to larger tertiary hospitals like The Medical Center in Macon. This will not only be a benefit to the patient, who is able to expediently access care, but is also less strain on loved ones who travel to be at the patient’s side. It is the right thing to do for those we serve, and we’re pleased to partner with Atrium Health to bring this service to the region,” said Dr. Ninfa M. Saunders, President and CEO of Navicent Health. “Although the circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic were the catalyst for VCC’s early launch, this robust platform unites Navicent Health’s local expert providers with additional resources for the best patient outcomes, close to home. We look forward to exploring more opportunities to expand access to critical services in other communities.”

In order to launch VCC, a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, information systems specialists and administrators in both Georgia and North Carolina worked closely together to secure access to information systems and design an innovative patient care workflow to ensure the needs of both bedside clinicians and patients are met.

“We appointed VCC medical directors who worked closely with doctors at each hospital to ensure their specific needs were met. Nursing leaders at each hospital also collaborated to ensure VCC is efficient, sustainable and effective in treating patients. VCC has been used at Atrium Health for a number of years, and we were fortunate to have their expertise for seamless implementation in central Georgia,” said Oliver.

To learn more about the VCC platform and view a video showcasing its use, please visit https://atriumhealth.org/medical-services/specialty-care/other-specialty-care-services/virtual-critical-care

About Navicent Health
Navicent Health, the leading provider of healthcare in central and south Georgia, is committed to its mission of elevating health and wellbelonging through compassionate care. Providing more than 1,000 beds and offering care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region, Navicent Health provides care for healthcare consumers’ through an academic medical center; community, pediatric and rehabilitation hospitals; urgent care centers; physician practices; diagnostic centers; home health; hospice and palliative care; and a life plan community. Navicent Health is dedicated enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. For more information, please visit www.navicenthealth.org.

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