SGMC CONFIRMS POSITIVE CASE OF COVID-19

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VALDOSTA, Ga- Late last evening, South Georgia Medical Center was notified that a team member who was considered a “high” risk of exposure to the first presumptive positive COVID-19 patient initially cared for at SGMC on March 5-7 and later diagnosed presumptive positive in a hospital in Florida, has tested positive for COVID-19.

This team member was tested for COVID-19 after being identified as a high risk for exposure and after becoming symptomatic. However, those symptoms have been managed at home while under monitoring guidance as recommended by the DPH and CDC. These symptoms have not been severe enough for outpatient or inpatient hospitalization. During SGMC’s daily wellness checks this person has reported doing well and as of last night reported 75 percent of symptoms have resolved. SGMC determined this team member was exposed on March 6 and some of the initial symptoms were noticed on March 11, when this person was identified as a high risk exposure and thereafter placed under monitoring guidance at home.

Immediately after receiving the test results last evening, three key steps have been taken by SGMC. First, SGMC notified the Department of Public Health and members of its COVID-19 clinically led Readiness Team and members of that team have since met this morning with DPH officials to plan the next appropriate steps as recommended by the DPH and according to CDC guidelines.

Second, SGMC immediately made the team member aware of the test results and have continued to monitor progress as originally planned while recovering at home. SGMC officials do not expect this team member to receive additional treatment since initial symptoms are improving while at home. All other SGMC team members who have been identified as high risk of exposure from the initial patient continue monitoring guidance at home and are not showing signs or symptoms requiring further evaluation or treatment at the time of this report.

And third, SGMC has undertaken additional steps in its exposure protocol to determine who may have been exposed to the team member who tested positive for COVID-19 and is working through its risk stratification protocol with guidance from the DPH and CDC. SGMC will efficiently communicate with each one identified and establish the appropriate monitoring guidance once determined.
SGMC is exercising its communication and precautions plan. Those exposed who exhibit symptoms will receive further evaluation and possibly testing according to findings and clinical protocols as recommended by the DPH and CDC. According to SGMC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Brian Dawson, “At this time, we are not aware of any who have been exposed to this team member that are symptomatic, but will continue to work thoroughly through the process to determine who if any need monitoring guidance or further evaluation.” SGMC has not and is not currently treating any known COVID-19 patients in any of its three hospitals. According to current reports, there are two positively diagnosed COVID-19 patients in Lowndes County.

SGMC Chief Executive Officer Ronald E. Dean said, “SGMC continues to emphasize the importance of self awareness and personal responsibility to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Hand washing, surface cleaning, social distancing, coughing in a tissue, no large gatherings and remaining at home if you are sick unless you need medical care are some of the best preventive measures to exercise.”

SGMC’s top priority is the safety of its patients, employees, physicians, volunteers and visitors. Leadership continues to enhance visitation protocols and more information will follow about additional visitor guidance and restrictions. SGMC continues to strongly encourage visitors to adhere to visitation guidelines, and ask that they understand these guidelines will become more stringent as the situation evolves. Children under the age of 18 should not visit even when accompanied by another. Visitation should be limited to two visitors per patient only. And, if you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, or symptoms of a cold or flu, do not visit the hospital.

Dean continued, “We will continue to update on our preparedness and policies daily. We will continue to conduct wellness checks on our staff, especially those who are under exposure monitoring guidance. And we will continue to send out updates to the public, our team and other community partners to ensure the very best information possible.” For more information on the latest regarding COVID-19, visit the CDC website.

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