



Media contact:

Stefanie Asin
713.857.7836 cell
slasin@houstonmethodist.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2021

**Houston Methodist and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
partner to expand access to COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment**

HOUSTON- (May 27, 2021) – Houston Methodist announced today, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), that it has expanded access to COVID-19 monoclonal antibody therapy (mAb) in the Greater Houston area. The promising treatment has been shown to keep high-risk COVID-19 patients out of the hospital and reduce the likelihood of progression to severe disease.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system’s ability to fight off harmful pathogens such as viruses. If administered within 10 days of onset of COVID-19 symptoms, the one-time therapy is effective in neutralizing the virus and preventing symptoms from worsening. The treatment is administered through intravenous infusion, delivering medication directly into a patient’s bloodstream.

Houston Methodist is among the nation’s largest providers of mAb therapy and has been a leader in successfully treating high-risk patients with mAb for mild to moderate COVID-19 infection with initial findings published online in the [New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst](#) on March 29. By leveraging research expertise and rapid health care system coordination, Houston Methodist was able to quickly expand access to mAb therapies resulting in positive patient outcomes, allowing the most at-risk patients with COVID-19 a better chance of recovery.

Houston Methodist has infused nearly 4,200 patients since the FDA’s Emergency Use Authorization was issued in November. As stated in the *NEJM* findings, reducing the need for hospitalization has been a vital measure of success, and it’s estimated nearly 400 COVID-19 related hospitalizations have been avoided, which amounts to a hospitalization rate of 4.2% after mAb infusion.

“Houston Methodist continues to serve the Houston area and beyond in the fight against COVID-19 through patient care and its commitment to research that brings promising new therapies to fight the disease,” said Marc Boom, M.D., president and CEO of Houston Methodist. “Our ability to rapidly establish and scale up treatments clinics and bring monoclonal antibody therapy to thousands of patients has led to this partnership with HHS. Together, we’ll expand access to mAb therapy to our most vulnerable communities.”

On March 17, 2021, HHS announced it was investing \$150 million to increase access to mAb therapy for high-risk patients in underserved and disadvantaged communities across the country. With support from KPMG LLP, HHS is developing new prototype models for expanding access to mAb treatment and leveraging an existing network of health care partners that have the experience and equipment necessary to provide the therapy.

"Americans continue to test positive for COVID-19 at increasing rates in many areas around the country and the most vulnerable in society are still at great risk of severe hospitalization and even death from this virus," said Dr. Meredith Chuk, the therapeutics distribution lead for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. "We encourage high-risk patients who test positive for COVID-19 to seek out monoclonal antibody treatment. We are pleased to partner with leaders in the medical community, like Houston Methodist, in this effort especially in underserved communities."

With support from HHS and KPMG, Houston Methodist will work with 15 of its federally qualified health centers that make up 40+ clinics in the Greater Houston area which provide care for patients in underserved communities and now offer access to mAb therapy. To qualify for this treatment, patients must meet certain eligibility criteria such as a positive COVID-19 test and receive a referral from a physician before they can be approved for mAb treatment.

For more information about mAb therapy, including qualification criteria, how to obtain a referral and other frequently asked questions about the therapy, click [here](#).

###

About Houston Methodist

Houston Methodist is one of the nation's leading health systems and academic medical centers. The health system consists of eight hospitals: Houston Methodist Hospital, its flagship academic hospital in the Texas Medical Center, six community hospitals and one long-term acute care hospital throughout the Greater Houston metropolitan area. Houston Methodist also includes a research institute; a comprehensive residency program; international patient services; freestanding comprehensive care, emergency care and imaging centers; and outpatient facilities. Houston Methodist employs more than 26,000 people and has had more than 1.3 million outpatient visits and more than 120,000 admissions in 2020.

About Crush COVID

A treatment for COVID-19 is here. With the help of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), state and local health departments, and hospital and health clinics across the country, treatment is free, safe and easy. Authorized by the FDA, monoclonal antibody therapy (mAbs) is available to patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are considered at high risk for progressing to severe COVID-19 and/or hospitalization. To learn more about eligibility and find a treatment location near you, visit <https://crushcovid.com/>.