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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BJC HealthCare, SSM Health, and HHS partner to expand access to monoclonal antibody therapy for COVID-19 patients

ST. LOUIS, MO., (October 15, 2021) – Two of the region’s largest health care systems are expanding access to COVID-19 therapy. BJC HealthCare, one of the largest nonprofit healthcare organizations in the United States, and SSM Health, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), have expanded access to COVID-19 monoclonal antibody (mAb) therapies. For people who are at high risk for developing severe COVID-19 illness and have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus or who are unvaccinated or immune compromised who have been exposed to COVID-19, this promising mAb treatment has been shown to help prevent progression of the disease that might otherwise require hospitalization.

With the recent surge in COVID-19 case rates, both systems will be offering increased access to the mAb treatment. BJC HealthCare has treated more than 2,000 patients with mAb therapy since December 2020 and will increase capacity at its Illinois infusion site from 72 treatments to 168 treatments per week. Eligible patients can receive the mAb treatment at Memorial Hospital Belleville. To confirm eligibility for the treatment and learn how to book an appointment, patients should visit www.bjc.org/crushcovid or call 314-696-1468.

SSM Health has treated more than 1,000 patients since first offering mAb therapy. It too is expanding access to the treatment – launching two sites in southern Illinois. Patients can receive treatment at SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital-Centralia and SSM Health Good Samaritan Hospital in Mt. Vernon. This initiative will allow SSM Health to expand from roughly 5 to 80 appointments a week. To confirm eligibility for the treatment and book an appointment in Centralia or Mt. Vernon, patients should call 618-899-3394.

If administered within 10 days of onset of COVID-19 symptoms, the one-time infusion therapy, made up of synthetic proteins designed to mimic the body’s own immune response, is highly effective in neutralizing the virus and preventing symptoms from worsening.

“Monoclonal antibody therapy is an important resource to help us get through the latest surge of COVID-19 and keep patients out of the hospital,” says Dr. Bruce Hall, MD, PhD, MBA, and chief quality officer for BJC HealthCare. “With the Delta variant remaining strong across our state, expanded access to this effective treatment will help even more members of our community recover faster and help curb the spread of COVID-19.”

"Monoclonal Antibody therapy is one of the few proven treatments for Covid-19 to keep people out of the hospital," says Monica Heinzman, SSM Health Illinois Regional Administrative Director of Ancillary Services. “We are really excited to be able to offer this therapy right here close to home and hope this expanded access will allow us to help even more Covid-19 positive patients get well quicker."

Medical leadership at both BJC and SSM Health encourage swift action following a positive COVID-19 test. They recognize while the treatment can save lives, the therapy is most effective if administered as early as possible. As soon as you've tested positive for the virus or had close contact with someone who has tested positive, you are encouraged to ask your doctor if you are eligible for the monoclonal antibody therapy.

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 therapy and leveraging an existing network of health care partners to provide the treatment for underserved and disadvantaged populations.

SSM Health and BJC HealthCare are the first systems in Illinois to join this national initiative, following expansion of their respective infusion capabilities in Missouri. They join a growing list of mAb therapy providers supported by KPMG and sponsored by HHS as part of the federal effort to help end COVID-19 and improve health equity in underserved communities across the country. In addition to the BJC and SSM locations, more than 70 infusion sites have now been established or expanded under this initiative in Landover, MD; San Diego, CA; Detroit, MI; Barnstable County, MA; Houston, TX; Beckley, WV; Worcester, MA; western Michigan; Missouri, northeast South Carolina, southern Mississippi, northern Mississippi, central Mississippi, North Carolina, south central Louisiana, Washington, D.C., several regions of Alabama, and western Tennessee.

The therapy is the first COVID-19 treatment granted emergency use authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for outpatient use. A Phase 3 clinical trial showed that the antibody therapy reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by up to 70% in patients who received the drug intravenously compared to those who received a placebo.

To be eligible for mAb treatment, patients must meet the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) definition of “high risk.” The FDA emergency use authorization provides additional information on eligibility for mAb treatment. Treatment is offered regardless of immigration status, health insurance coverage, or ability to pay.

The [FDA emergency use authorization](#) provides additional information on eligibility for mAb treatment. Treatment is offered regardless of immigration status, health insurance coverage, or ability to pay.

About BJC HealthCare:

BJC HealthCare is one of the largest nonprofit health care organizations in the United States, serving the comprehensive health needs of communities across the greater St. Louis, southern Illinois, and southeast Missouri regions. BJC HealthCare serves the health care needs of urban, suburban, and rural communities and includes 15 hospitals and multiple community health locations.

As one of the largest nonprofit health care integrated delivery organizations in the country, BJC HealthCare is committed to improving the health and well-being of the people and communities it services through leadership, education, innovation, and excellence in medicine. For more information, visit www.bjc.org or find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About SSM Health:

SSM Health is a Catholic, not-for-profit health system serving the comprehensive health needs of communities across the Midwest through a robust and fully integrated health care delivery system. The organization's nearly 40,000 employees and 11,000 providers are committed to providing exceptional health care services and revealing God's healing presence to everyone they serve.

With care delivery sites in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma and Wisconsin, SSM Health includes 23 hospitals, more than 290 physician offices and other outpatient and virtual care services, 10 post-acute facilities, comprehensive home care and hospice services, a pharmacy benefit company, a health insurance company and an accountable care organization. It is one of the largest employers in every community it serves. For more information, visit ssmhealth.com or find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Crush COVID: A treatment for COVID-19 is here and is available in every state at hundreds of locations across the country. With the help of KPMG, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), state and local health departments, and local hospitals and health clinics, eligible patients will have increased access to monoclonal antibody therapy (mAbs) treatment in a growing number of underserved and disadvantaged communities through this initiative. Authorized by the FDA, mAbs are available to high risk patients who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or are unvaccinated and have been exposed to the virus. To learn more about eligibility and find a treatment location near you, visit <https://crushcovid.com>.