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Georgia sites testing COVID-19 treatment used by Trump

President Donald Trump's COVID-19 treatment has put the spotlight on a little-known experimental drug being tested at several sites in Georgia.

White House officials said a single 8-gram dose of the treatment, called REGN-COV2, was given to the president late last week, in addition to more well-known medications, such as remdesivir.

The drug is a combination of two antibodies designed specifically to block the virus that causes COVID-19. It's supposed to catch the disease early enough to reduce its spread and avoid hospitalization.



The drug was developed by Regeneron, a company based in New York, with locations in several states and in Europe. The federal government in July awarded Regeneron a \$450 million contract to manufacture and supply the drug.

The company said local test sites include Piedmont Healthcare and other hospital systems in Georgia. In some instances, the Georgia facilities are looking for study participants.

Some Georgia universities, including Emory, have been involved in COVID-19 treatment research. Emory's Hope Clinic is exploring whether the drug will prevent infection in those who may have been exposed to the virus.

One of the test sites is the Lake Country Medical Group, located near Lake Oconee. The local research is being led by Dr. Nicolas Chronos, a cardiologist who has done clinical research for about 30 years.

Chronos said his clinic has been screening potential study participants for about two weeks and plans to begin testing this week.

Chronos is hopeful Trump's case will raise public awareness of trial research and encourage more people to participate. Much of their outreach has been done through Facebook, Chronos said. He anticipates having at least 30 participants a month in its Phase 3 study, and is particularly interested in studying the drug's effect in college students because of their potential to infect large numbers of people who live in dorms and their families.

"I'm hoping it shows a spotlight on how important these drugs are going to be," Chronos said in a telephone interview Monday.

Regeneron said more than 2,000 people have been enrolled in the drug's development program. The company released a paper last week that says the drug has resulted in reduced levels of COVID-19 in study participants in less than half the time as a placebo. It also says there have been no significant side effects.

The research was based on the first 275 patients enrolled in the trial. Critics say more research of the drug should have been done before it was given to the president. The company said White House officials called them asking for the drug, its chief executive officer told The New York Times.

Trump held stock in Regeneron, June 2017 federal finance records show, making a capital gain between \$50,001 and \$100,000. The president's most recent forms show no investment in the company.

Investors appeared excited by the treatment Monday as Regeneron's stock price rose by 7%, to \$605 a share.

Here are examples of some different types of COVID-19 treatment research ongoing in Georgia:

- Emory University has been involved in researching the effectiveness of [remdesivir](#) as treatment. U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials in May gave the drug emergency use authorization as treatment for severely infected patients.
- Georgia State University has been studying [auranofin](#), a rheumatoid arthritis drug already on the market, as treatment. Its initial research showed the drug made about 95% of the virus disappear in 48 hours, and the infection completely disappeared shortly thereafter, the researchers say. The Georgia State team is working with the American Association for Precision Medicine on additional research.
- Morehouse School of Medicine began work earlier this year on an herbal treatment used about 15 years ago to treat HIV patients in Senegal who they say are now symptom free. The plant-based extract, they say, has little to no side effects.

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