



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™

News Release

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Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Teams Bring Convalescent Plasma Treatments to West Texas

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) medical teams from the Panhandle and South Plains recently joined a study led by the Mayo Clinic to use convalescent plasma in severely-ill patients with coronavirus (COVID-19).

“This may be the most promising treatment we have at this time,” TTUHSC Executive Vice President and School of Medicine Dean Steven Berk, M.D., said. “This is one of the many reasons having our medical schools in Lubbock, Amarillo and the Permian Basin benefits people living in those communities. TTUHSC’s access to partnerships allows us to deliver the latest treatment options to patients in West Texas. We were able to shepherd this project into the area within 48 hours.”

Thomas Hale, Ph.D., associate dean for Research in Amarillo, and Afzal Siddiqui, Ph.D., vice president for Institutional Collaborations, quickly mobilized efforts to execute the Investigational New Drug (IND) application through the Mayo Clinic and Baylor College of Medicine. The program is a U.S. government-sponsored, FDA approved study entitled “Expanded Access to Convalescent Plasma for the Treatment of Patients with COVID-19.”

“This is a result of focused work from a team of people at TTUHSC,” Berk said. “We are also grateful to our hospital partners that provide us the facilities to make these treatments possible.”

Patients are getting this treatment at medical centers in Amarillo and Lubbock. Texas Tech Physicians (TTP) pulmonologist Victor Test, M.D., is principal investigator in Lubbock and TTP pulmonologist and critical care physician Mark Sigler, M.D., is principal investigator in Amarillo.

“During a pandemic such as this, we need to be scientific in quickly identifying potential therapies and then assessing their effectiveness,” Sigler said. “Working with the Mayo Clinic



as a study site for using convalescent plasma in the management of COVID-19 was a clear opportunity to meaningfully contribute to our knowledge of how to best treat COVID-19.”

After a person has recovered from COVID-19, antibodies to the virus develop. After the plasma of such a recovered patient is collected, it is then infused into a person still fighting the infection. This offers a sick patient an opportunity to benefit from antibodies made from the donor that are specific to the new virus. The approach has been used to treat other viral infections such as Ebola and SARS.

Donating plasma is a similar experience to donating blood. Plasma is collected using a machine that separates red blood cells from the plasma in a blood donation. After plasma is collected, red blood cells are returned to the donor. Plasma is stored at a blood bank and is distributed for treatment when needed.

Recovered patients can coordinate a donation with area blood centers through their physicians, the health department or through a donor registry.

To provide convalescent plasma, donors must be eligible to donate blood and meet the criteria including:

- Prior diagnosis of COVID-19, documented by a laboratory test
- Present negative results for COVID-19, either from nasal swabs or a molecular (RNA or nucleic acid) diagnostic blood test
- Symptom-free for 14 days prior to donation
- If female, either no history of pregnancy or negative for HLA (tissue typing) antibodies

Stay up to date on the latest COVID-19 information from TTUHSC, [here](#).