



## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

**ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD**  
DIRECTOR

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 10, 2021

21-128

## **Federal resources to bolster administration of monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19**

HONOLULU – A federal team of 30 civilians is being deployed to Hawai'i to administer monoclonal antibody therapy to treat COVID-19 patients. Increasing access to monoclonal antibody therapy will decrease severe illness in individuals recently infected with COVID-19, providing relief to Hawaii's hospitals. Monoclonal antibody therapy is not a substitute for vaccination.

Monoclonal antibodies help the immune system temporarily respond to the immediate infection. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued Emergency Use Authorization for a number of monoclonal antibody therapies that serve as early treatment after a COVID-19 diagnosis.

"Targeted use of monoclonal antibodies could keep Hawai'i COVID-19 patients from developing severe illness that requires hospitalization," said Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Char, FACEP. "However, COVID-19 vaccination remains the most effective way to create long-lasting immunity and prevent severe illness and death. Increasing access to monoclonal antibody therapy will reduce strain on our hospitals. We thank our state and federal partners for their assistance."

"We are taking yet another strategic step to preserve hospital capacity during a time of unprecedented demand," said President and CEO of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii (HAH) Hilton Raethel. "Increasing the number of COVID positive residents who receive this therapy will result in a reduction of symptoms, and reduce demand on our hospitals."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is providing the 30 clinicians to augment existing capacity to administer this treatment. They are expected to arrive in Hawai'i on September 19.

Six teams will be stationed at hospitals or federally qualified health centers across the state, administering treatments seven days a week. The teams will administer monoclonal antibodies by injection. Treatment requires monitoring and the ability to respond to reactions or other medical events.

Monoclonal antibody therapy is not a substitute for vaccination. Monoclonal antibodies provide a short burst of immunity, compared to the longer-lasting immunity created by vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing severe illness and death.

Treatment with monoclonal antibodies within the first 10 days of symptom onset could reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death. This treatment is authorized for individuals 12 and older with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at [high risk for severe illness](#), not hospitalized and do not require supplemental oxygen. Patients must be referred by a physician. While not everyone will be eligible for monoclonal antibody therapy, all people 12 and older are eligible to be vaccinated.

###