

MEDIA RELEASE

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MUSC HEALTH – FLORENCE DIVISION BEGINS COVID-19 ANTIBODY TESTING

Florence, SC (May 5, 2020) -- MUSC Health—Florence Division began offering voluntary COVID-19 serologic testing to care team members at MUSC Health - Florence Medical Center and MUSC Health – Marion Medical Center on April 27, 2020. Testing is initially being offered to care team members and first responders. Testing time is Monday – Friday 8:00am – 5:00 pm. The expansion of this service to others in the community will start in the coming weeks.

The serology test is a blood test that looks for the presence of antibodies, which are specific proteins made in response to infections. Antibodies can be found in the blood and in other tissues of those who are tested after an infection. The antibodies detected by this test indicate that a person had an antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), whether symptoms developed from the infection or the infected person was asymptomatic. These antibodies may help provide protection from future infection as well as identify those still at risk.

“Many have been asking about immunity testing especially among health care workers. This test will help identify individuals who have developed antibodies without significant symptoms. Many of my colleagues have taken the test,” said Dr. Rami Zebian, MUSC Health - Florence Division Chief Medical Officer and Board Certified Pulmonary and Critical Care Physician. “Everyone still needs to follow the recommendations established by the CDC in regard to social distancing, safe practice, and using appropriate PPE.”

The cost of the test will be billed to insurance. Based on the recent CARES Act, there is not an anticipated outstanding balance for the patient for this test.

It is important to know that there are limitations to serological testing:

- *In the early days of an infection when the body's antibody response is still building, antibodies may not be detected. For this reason, serological tests should not be used as the sole basis to diagnose or exclude infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus.*
- *There is still a great deal we don't yet fully understand about COVID-19 immunity. For example, we do not know whether or not someone who has developed antibodies is fully protected from reinfection, or how long any immunity lasts.*

As soon as testing is opened to the community, the process for signing up will be communicated to the local communities.

About MUSC

The MUSC Health Florence Division consists of MUSC Health – Florence and Marion Medical Centers and the employed practices of each hospital. Both hospitals and entities are a part of the MUSC family.

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available, while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians' practice plan, and nearly 275 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2019, for the fifth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit muschealth.org.

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3.2 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care.

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