

BROADCAST SCRIPT-Monoclonal antibodies helpful, but no substitute for full vaccination, health experts say

Peoria-Illinois, based OSF HealthCare has begun following advice from the nation's leading infectious disease expert and White House medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Dr. Fauci urges physicians to make more use of monoclonal antibodies for treatment of COVID-19 at a time when OSF HealthCare has been leading in their use. OSF vice president for community health Dr. Meeker says OSF HealthCare pivoted to a new and improved monoclonal antibody cocktail from the initial regimen of Bamlanivimab.

“When that data became apparent, we stopped infusing BAM as we called it at the time, and we switched to REGEN-COV. REGEN-COV is effective against the variants, and it’s still available and we’re still using it for specific people who get symptomatic COVID.” (:19)

REGEN-COV is authorized for treatment of people over age 12.

According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, clinical trials have demonstrated that early treatment with monoclonal antibodies can reduce the risk of COVID-19 hospitalization or death by 70 to 85%. The laboratory-made antibody mimics a naturally occurring one, which is known to fight off the virus that causes COVID-19.

Dr. Meeker recognizes there is a preventative benefit – supported by updated research – that monoclonal antibodies can help certain high-risk patients and so OSF HealthCare is using the treatment more widely.

“If someone is at high risk of getting bad COVID and they know they have an exposure because the person they had contact with has tested positive and is sick, then we can give monoclonal antibodies to the exposed person to prevent illness. Instead of waiting for them to get sick and catch up, we can give it in a preventative fashion so that they have less risk of getting sick.” (:20)

The Federal Food and Drug Administration recently expanded its authorization to use monoclonal antibodies to prevent infection in people exposed to the virus and who are at risk including people who are obese, pregnant have chronic conditions or are age 65 or older. However, health experts warn it is not a replacement for full vaccination.

Dr. Meeker says the novel virus has accelerated medical response out of necessity, and so as new data comes in and the virus changes, so will the approaches to containing and treating the disease.

“We’re changing as rapidly as we can to try to keep up with the knowledge that’s being gained from across the world, not just the country. It’s a moving target. It’s a fascinating time and I would just encourage you, if you have any questions, talk with your physician or your APP (advanced practice provider).” (:24)

You can see [a full list of conditions](#) that might qualify you for treatment using monoclonal antibodies for treatment of COVID-19 or as a preventative measure in a link to the National Institutes of Health website which is included in our online story.