

NEWS **SARASOTA, MANATEE COUNTY**

Sarasota Memorial Hospital joins two national clinical trials for COVID-19 treatment



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SARASOTA, Fla. — Sarasota Memorial Hospital is one of a handful of hospitals in the country doing clinical trials to help find a cure for COVID-19.

SMH has tested more than 800 patients for COVID-19, 75 have tested positive and 44 have recovered.

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This week, Sarasota Memorial Hospital started two national clinical trials related to the treatment of COVID-19.

"We are some of the first centers in the United States that are doing some of these trials," said Dr. James Fiorica, SMH Chief Medical Officer.

There is currently no proven, established treatment for COVID-19, which is why SMH says participating in these trials is so important.

"These other agents such as the antibiotics are treating the inflammation, they're not actually treating the virus. These agents that we're proposing now are actually intended to go right after the virus," said Dr. Fiorica.

The hospital says Remdesivir has previously shown promise in the treatment of other types of coronaviruses. SMH is one of the first hospitals in the Southeast region to participate in this worldwide study to assess the medication's safety and effectiveness in treating COVID-19.



To be given the option to participate in the FDA-approved Remdesivir trial at SMH, COVID-19 positive patients must be hospitalized, on a ventilator and meet other clinical criteria.

The convalescent plasma study is a clinical trial that is coordinated with the Mayo Clinic to evaluate whether the antibodies in plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 can help newly infected patients. The hospital says plasma from just one donor can be used to treat up to four patients.

SMH will partner with the Suncoast Blood Centers, which will collect and provide the donated plasma for this FDA-approved trial. Sarasota Memorial Hospital - Florida State University Internal Medicine resident physicians will collaborate with the SMH Clinical Research Team to help gather data to conduct this research.

SMH says they're unsure how long it will take to see any results but they're hopeful.

"I just came out of the intensive care unit. Particularly the COVID-19 intensive care unit where these people are very very sick, and I'm grateful that we have some kind of

ammunition to fight this. I'm hopeful that we will be part of the solution," said Dr. Kirk Voelker, SMH director of clinical research.