



## **Symphony Care Network Deploys “Hot Spot” Testing Squad to Halt Spread of COVID-19**

*Symphony Reaches Over 200 Successful COVID-19 Patient Recoveries, 48 at Joliet Nursing Home*

CHICAGO (May 13, 2020) — Symphony Care Network’s COVID-19 Task Force today dispatched its new “hot spot” testing unit to help stop the spread of coronavirus and to support recovery efforts at its hardest hit facilities, with over 200 patient recoveries across its network. At Symphony of Joliet, 48 patients in its care have recovered, and the facility currently has only one COVID-19 positive patient.

Circumventing the ongoing national shortage of COVID-19 tests for nursing homes, Symphony recently purchased its own set of Abbott ID NOW rapid testing instruments to deploy strategically to prevent further infection at its facilities.

“This virus spreads like wildfire once it enters a nursing home, invisibly attacking one of our most vulnerable patient populations, and yet testing of nursing home patients and staff by federal and state agencies has been scarce at best,” said Dr. Alexander Stemer, co-chair of Symphony’s COVID-19 Task Force. “It’s clear Symphony had to take matters into our own hands.”

Symphony will send its testing unit to three areas within its network:

- Facilities with large numbers of COVID-19 patients who are on the road to recovery, including its Joliet and South Shore locations
- Nursing homes with emerging outbreaks to conduct facility-wide testing of patients and staff to isolate positive results, many of whom remain asymptomatic, to help stop the spread of the virus and move quickly into recovery and prevention modes
- Locations that currently have no or very few cases and where local and state public health authorities have not yet conducted widespread testing to ensure the facility remains COVID-19 free.

Because supplies are expected to remain limited from public health authorities, Symphony will prioritize testing at these facilities of:

- New patient admissions to confirm the patient’s COVID-19 status before entering the facility to determine if they are placed in an isolation unit or a COVID-19-negative area
- All nursing home staff and patients where local and state public health authorities have not yet conducted widespread testing and have no plan to test

- Patients and employees who previously tested negative for COVID-19 to ensure they remain negative.

Symphony was an early advocate for “universal testing” at nursing homes and sought out alternative sources of tests when it was clear public health authorities lacked adequate supplies, including calling on the National Guard and partnering with the University of Chicago Medicine to test patients.

In the first weeks of the U.S. outbreak, public health authorities had advised long-term care facilities to cease testing patients and employees once a positive case was identified due to the lack of testing supplies. In Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s administration later called for testing all patients and staff at nursing homes, while just this week, Vice President Pence called on states to prioritize testing at nursing homes.

In April, Symphony announced the formation of its COVID-19 Task Force, led by Dr. Stemer in partnership with Dr. Stacie Levine, chief of the section of geriatrics and palliative care at University of Chicago Medicine. Together, they are leading a team of clinicians in implementing the most effective known treatments and procedures to save the lives of Symphony patients and employees. Symphony’s COVID-19 Task Force devised this testing plan and protocol to support its mission.

The Task Force is also focusing on how to increase communications with patients’ families to provide more frequent updates about their relatives in Symphony’s care. Symphony facilities have expanded their reception hours and shifted staff to ensure more personnel are available to handle calls from patients’ family members. In addition, the company is in the final stages of procuring a broadcast message solution tool that will issue text and email messages to families, along with video linking capabilities. Dr. Stemer is also providing regular video updates about Symphony’s infection control protocols to counteract the spread of coronavirus and sharing learnings from the task force about the advanced clinical strategies they are using to successfully treat patients.

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