Trial for potential coronavirus treatment is underway at Montefiore and Einstein

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Barry Zingman, M.D., of Montefiore Health System and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, is leading a clinical trial at the institution to evaluate the experimental drug remdesivir to treat people who are hospitalized with severe COVID-19 infection Credit: Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Montefiore Health System and Albert Einstein College of Medicine has joined a clinical trial to evaluate the experimental drug remdesivir to treat people who are hospitalized with severe COVID-19 infection. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health, is sponsoring the trial. This treatment has the potential to help people who have serious lung complications as a result of COVID-19. Recruitment for the trial began in March and is still underway.

Montefiore-Einstein is one of 46 testing sites nationwide and is the first site in New York State to open. NIAID launched the multi-center international effort to determine if remdesivir, a broad-spectrum antiviral drug, acts against COVID-19 viral infection. Remdesivir has shown promise in animal models of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), both caused by human coronaviruses.

The randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial is being led by principal investigator Barry Zingman, M.D., professor of medicine at Einstein and clinical director, infectious diseases, in the Moses division of Montefiore Health System. The trial is "adaptive," meaning it can be modified to include other investigational treatments. "This flexibility allows us to add additional therapies to the trial step-by-step to improve treatment as the pandemic continues," said Dr. Zingman.

Trial participants are hospitalized patients with a laboratory-confirmed coronavirus infection and lung complications, including rattling sounds when breathing, a need for supplemental oxygen, abnormal chest X-rays showing pneumonia, or the need for a mechanical ventilator.

People in the treatment group will receive 200 mg of remdesivir intravenously on the first day of their enrollment in the study and will receive another 100 mg each day for the duration of hospitalization, for up to 10 days total. The placebo group will receive an equal volume of a solution that resembles remdesivir but contains inactive ingredients.

Montefiore and Einstein's robust clinical trial infrastructure contributed to its selection and rapid approval for participation.No therapies have yet been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for treating COVID-19.

Remdesivir, an investigational antiviral therapy, was developed by Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Provided by Albert Einstein College of Medicine