FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Vaccination Launch
for Healthcare Workers Across Baton Rouge Health District

BATON ROUGE, LA – In an exciting development in the year-long fight against COVID-19, all major hospitals across the Baton Rouge Health District have successfully started vaccinating their healthcare providers and caregivers against COVID-19.

Over 125,000 frontline healthcare personnel will get vaccinated across Louisiana over the coming weeks and months in the first part of Louisiana’s three phase vaccine rollout plan. Vaccination will continue to expand into the Spring and Summer of 2021 to cover all of Louisiana. More information about Louisiana’s vaccine roll-out is available on the state health department’s website at www.ldh.la.gov.

“The healthcare community is leading the way in getting vaccinated and protecting both the public and themselves as they care for those stricken ill by the pandemic.” said Steven Ceulemans, Executive Director for the Baton Rouge Health District. “Our caregivers’ unified example and leadership will continue to be vital in fighting the deadly COVID-19 virus, in our community and across the country”.

“It’s more important than ever this holiday season that each of us takes an active role in preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus.” said Dr. Stephanie Mills, Executive Vice President-Health Services and Chief Medical Officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana. “Now is the time to keep up social distancing, avoid large gatherings, wear a face mask when around people who don’t live with us, wash our hands often, and isolate ourselves if we are having symptoms of COVID-19.

People have expressed some concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines and their possible safety. Medical leaders across the Health District are speaking up in support of the COVID-19 vaccines as a safe, effective, and essential tool in fighting the pandemic:
1. “This vaccine is one way that we can build herd immunity and get one step closer to ending this pandemic. These vaccines have been extensively tested using years of proven research to get them where they are today. If you have questions or concerns about this vaccine, speak with your healthcare provider on the best option for you, but I encourage everyone to strongly consider taking the vaccine,” said Catherine O’Neal, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Our Lady of the Lake.

2. “Getting both a COVID-19 vaccine and a flu shot isn’t a problem. Everyone should want both because preventing the combination of flu and COVID is very important. It’s not too late for the flu shot, just speak to your healthcare provider to ensure that you space out the vaccines,” said Dr. Ralph Dauterive, Vice President of Medical Affairs for Ochsner Baton Rouge.

3. “It is not possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine” said Dr. Andrew Olinde, Chief Medical Officer at Baton Rouge General. “The current vaccines require two doses, with full protection expected to start within a week after receiving the second dose”.

4. “Women in later stages of pregnancy are considered at higher risk for more severe COVID-19 complications. Woman’s supports the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in recommending that every pregnant and breastfeeding woman discuss with her OB-GYN to determine if she meets the criteria for vaccination,” said Dr. Barbara Griffith, Woman’s Hospital CEO/President. “Other ways for pregnant women to continue to remain healthy include getting a flu shot, practicing social distancing and wearing masks.”

5. “The COVID-19 vaccines are based on years of medical research and vaccine development. While the COVID-19 virus is new, the technology and science behind the breakthrough vaccines and their rapid development has been extensively proven.” added Dr. Frank Greenway, Chief Medical Officer at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. More vaccine science information is available in a video called "Tell Me More About Vaccines", made available here through U.S. Health and Human Services.

6. “In exclusively caring for patients with cancer, we are keenly aware of the importance of keeping those who have compromised immune systems safe,” said Dr. Charles Wood, medical director, radiation oncology, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. “And with COVID-19, taking the vaccine is best way to ensure we can do this. This is the start of the breakthrough we’ve been anticipating, but it’s important to remain vigilant in masking-up, washing our hands, social distancing and all of the other precautions we take as the vaccine makes it way throughout the community and country.”
About the Baton Rouge Health District
The Baton Rouge Health District is a coalition of patient-focused, innovative healthcare organizations committed to the vision of a world-class, high performing health destination at the heart of a healthy and vibrant community. As a non-profit organization, the Health District promotes collaboration among healthcare providers, government officials, payors, higher education institutions and others to implement a master plan that will enhance healthcare and economic development in Baton Rouge. Founding members of the Baton Rouge Health District include Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Baton Rouge General Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Ochsner Health Systems, Pennington Biomedical Research Center at Louisiana State University and Woman’s Hospital. More information is available at http://brhealthdistrict.com/.

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