



Guam Memorial Hospital Authority

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For Immediate Release

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GMHA COVID patient released after emergency C-Section, 9 weeks hospitalized; reunites with baby for first time

November 15, 2021 – Tamuning, Guam – It was nothing short of a miracle at Guam Memorial Hospital this weekend. GMHA staff lined the hallways, cheered, danced and even cried as they celebrated the release of a 25-year-old woman who was admitted to the hospital on September 11, 2021 at 37 weeks pregnant.

On that fateful Saturday in September, Ms. Justina Garcia came into GMHA’s Emergency Room, having already tested positive for COVID, and with worsening flu-like symptoms. Ms. Garcia said she couldn’t feel her baby move and got to the ER as soon as possible. Doctors told her the baby’s heartrate was dropping, due to her fever, and she was led straight into an emergency C-Section in GMHA’s Labor and Delivery unit. That’s the last thing Justina remembers. She then woke up in late October, some 6-weeks later, in GMHA’s Intensive Care Unit (ICU), intubated and with a tracheostomy.

“I woke up not knowing where I was, what happened or anything. I didn’t know I had COVID pneumonia or that it was that serious,” said Ms. Garcia on Saturday before her discharge. “My parents have had my daughter this whole time...since I gave birth. I can’t wait to hold her...to meet her. I missed out on a lot and I’m really excited to be with her.”

For about 6 weeks, Ms. Garcia was sedated and intubated in the ICU, due to a severe case of COVID pneumonia. Although the odds were against her, GMHA staff and her parents held on hope, prayers and continued working around-the-clock to ensure her survival.

“It was a battle for life throughout most of Ms. Garcia’s stay in the ICU. Our ICU team fought alongside her, with the primary goal of getting Ms. Garcia home to her newborn and family,” said Dr. Joleen M. Aguon, Pulmonary & Critical Care Physician, COVID Medical Director and Associate Administrator of Clinical Services. “GMHA’s multidisciplinary teams of physicians, nurses, Respiratory and Rehab Therapists, Clinical Pharmacists and others, banded together, determined to getting Ms. Garcia home. This was a massive team effort and truly an example of GMHA’s relentless pursuit to provide excellent healthcare to our community.”

In a grand celebration, Ms. Garcia was released from GMHA to the care of her family on Saturday November 13, after 9 weeks in hospital. Her family was overwhelmed with happiness and gratitude for the hospital staff who saved their daughter’s life. Dozens of hospital employees cheered on, as Ms. Garcia was wheeled out the front doors around 4pm. She is able to safely continue recovering at home, with her baby, through GMHA’s newly launched Oxygen Home Loaner Program. Ms. Garcia was equipped with the supplemental O2 she needs to safely be home with her family and baby girl.

“My parents and the nurses, they fought to keep me alive. The nurses here at GMH have been outstanding and caring...and they knew that I needed that support. They held my hand, they hugged me, they spoke to me...they told



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me I'd be okay...that means everything to me," said Ms. Garcia. "Thank you for everything you've done for me and for not giving up on me."

"This is such an emotional time for our staff. We've worked so tirelessly to get through COVID-19. Watching this young woman battle through her COVID pneumonia and fight to survive...that's just the most incredible feeling for our entire GMHA family. This is why we are GMHA. We are one team, united, delivering healthcare with heart, every single day," said Lillian Perez-Posadas, GMHA CEO.

"On behalf of Governor Leon Guerrero and our administration, we commend our healthcare heroes for their tireless efforts to provide the best care possible to each and every patient who comes through their doors. We also thank Ms. Garcia for her bravery to share her personal experience so others may take the actions necessary to protect themselves and their families. Her fighting spirit, along with all our frontliners, reminds us that we will get through this pandemic together. We wish Ms. Garcia and baby a happy and healthy recovery," said Acting Governor Joshua Tenorio.

Ms. Garcia was not vaccinated while pregnant but plans to get the vaccine now. She says if she could go back in time, she would have gotten the COVID-vaccination during her pregnancy.

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