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**UAMS Establishes Institute for Digital Health & Innovation;
Curtis Lowery, M.D., Named Director**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has established the Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, and named Curtis Lowery, M.D., as its director.

Lowery is founder and medical director of the UAMS Center for Distance Health. He also served for many years as chair of the UAMS Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the College of Medicine. C. Lowry Barnes, M.D., will serve as interim chair of the department while a search for a permanent chair is conducted. Barnes is chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery.

Digital health is delivering health care through technology such as smart phones, interactive live video, wearable devices and personal computers. It reduces the cost of health care and improves access for patients, especially in a rural environment like the state of Arkansas.

“As we continue into the new year, I believe this new institute will better position UAMS for the future and support our efforts to serve our patients and students,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA. “We want to ensure access to UAMS through technology and more partnerships in communities across the state. Our idea is not to swoop in and pull people out of those communities using digital technology. It’s the opposite. We want to provide access so they can get care where they are.”

Lowery has received numerous awards and has been recognized nationally for his pioneering work in distance health. He has been a champion of telemedicine benefiting patients and physicians alike. He founded the Antenatal and Neonatal Guidelines, Education and Learning System (ANGELS), a Medicaid-funded, telehealth program for high-risk pregnancy patients, and Arkansas Stroke Assistance through Virtual Emergency Support (SAVES), a similar program for stroke patients.

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UAMS Establishes Institute for Digital Health and Healthcare Innovation

Page 2

In the first six to 12 months, Lowery said, a top goal of the institute will be to distribute software and technology to patients so they can take part in live video consultations 24 hours a day, seven days a week with physicians and other health care professionals. That technology also will make it possible for providers to collect health data from patients continuously to guide their care and reduce the need for office visits or a trip to a hospital Emergency Department.

“The concept of home digital monitoring is where it’s all going to go,” Lowery said. “You’re going to do more things outside of the hospital and office and integrate patient care into people’s everyday lives.”

For example, he said, a physician or nurse can check on a daily or more frequent basis on a patient with congestive heart failure who recently was released from a hospital to make sure her medication is being effective and taken properly, avoiding a costly, second admission to the hospital.

“The institute also will begin to integrate with other health care systems outside of UAMS to start supporting their activities, especially underserved areas like the Delta,” Lowery said.

The institute can expand on existing relationships between UAMS and rural hospitals to provide access to medical specialties that aren’t in those communities. Increased access to specialists can reduce health care costs by reducing the need to transfer patients from rural hospitals to larger medical centers such as UAMS where those specialists often are more commonly practicing.

“In three to five years, I hope we’re succeeding in using digital health technology to reduce health care costs while sharing in those savings, delivering much more and better care to patients where they are, and improving population health,” Lowery said.

These changes and other economic factors will help move toward a new health care model that compensates and values providers for positive health outcomes rather than the now predominant, fee-for-service model, Lowery said.

Such a value-based health care system also will compensate providers for successfully managing the health of different populations of patients, especially those with chronic health conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure. In turn, cost savings will be created by those outcomes and by digitally providing health care in patients’ homes in a way that reduces hospitalizations, lengths of stay in hospitals and Emergency Department visits. Those savings will be shared with providers in a value-based health care system.

“That’s where the trend is going,” Lowery said. “Value benefits everybody. Being connected digitally is a good thing because physicians and patients can communicate better and providers can share resources. We have the potential of operating virtual health care networks.”

The Institute for Digital Health & Innovation will include the UAMS Center for Distance Health. Its programs, services and staff will be integrated into the new institute. The

UAMS Establishes Institute for Digital Health and Healthcare Innovation

Page 2

center currently connects all but a few hospitals and clinics across the state with telemedicine, continuing medical and health education, public health education, and evaluation research through interactive video.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,727 students, 870 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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