

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Receives \$4.6 Million Grant
to Address Rural Physician Shortage**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has received a \$4.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve access to quality health care in rural Arkansas by expanding efforts to train and retain primary care physicians.

The Arkansas Medical Education Primary Care Partnerships project aims to increase the number of primary care physicians practicing in rural areas and other medically underserved parts of the state. The four-year grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds a multipronged approach to:

- Strengthen the long-term health careers pipeline by recruiting and retaining more medical students from rural and underserved areas of the state, because such students are the most likely to return to practice in those areas.
- Create more opportunities for medical students to experience primary care practice in rural and underserved communities across Arkansas through service projects, mentoring, and a new Honors Track in Rural Primary Care, among others.
- Increase the number of rural clinical rotation sites and preceptors available to teach medical students in federally qualified health centers, critical access hospitals and other rural clinics and settings.
- Provide training and faculty development opportunities for new clinical faculty and preceptors at these new clinical sites.
- Strengthen partnerships with the Community Health Centers of Arkansas, Arkansas Rural Health Partnership, and historically black colleges and universities at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Philander Smith College in Little Rock.

The project is a partnership among the UAMS College of Medicine, UAMS Regional Campuses across the state, and the UAMS Department of Family & Preventive Medicine.

UAMS Executive Vice Chancellor and College of Medicine Dean Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., is the program director, assisted by co-directors Marcia Byers, Ph.D.,

director of clinical innovation for UAMS Regional Campuses; Daniel Knight, M.D., chair of the Department of Family & Preventive Medicine; and Leslie Stone, M.D., director of Medical Student Education for the Department of Family & Preventive Medicine.

“Retaining physicians to provide primary care in Arkansas has been a long-term mission of the College of Medicine,” Westfall said. “Although we have worked to make Arkansas a national leader in retaining our medical graduates, Arkansas still has one of the worst physician shortages in the nation and we’re among the states projected as most likely to have serious primary care shortages by 2025.”

Over 500,000 Arkansans — over one-sixth of its population — live in an area defined by the federal government as lacking the adequate number of health professionals to serve the population. According to the Arkansas Department of Health, 50 out of 75 counties in the state fully or partially meet that definition.

“Arkansans need a partner in their primary care physician, someone who is easily accessible and can work with them to prevent disease, rather than just react to issues when they become a problem,” Knight said. “Best practices in primary care are now based on this preventive model. However, this ideal is far from reality for most Arkansans, and will remain so as long as we lack enough physicians to truly serve our state.”

UAMS Regional Campuses sites can be found in eight locations across the state, and UAMS programs reach almost every county in the state.

“Our Regional Campuses and programs are perfectly positioned to have a broad impact across all of Arkansas,” Byers said. “This grant will allow us to strengthen our partnerships and enhance rural opportunities to turn today’s bright students into future health care champions for their home communities.”

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. *U.S. News & World Report* named UAMS Medical Center the state’s Best Hospital; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide; and named six areas as high performing — cancer, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. 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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