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**News Release**  
**Dec. 11, 2019**

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**UAMS Awarded \$4 Million to Study  
Digital Delivery of Heart Patient Care**

LITTLE ROCK – The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has been awarded \$4 million by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to study digital delivery of health care to patients with heart failure.

The project is under the leadership of Leanne Lefler, Ph.D., APRN, an associate professor in the College of Nursing, who is a Fellow of the American Heart Association and was named a Culture of Health Nursing Leader by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Lefler’s research will be conducted with the support of UAMS’s new Institute for Digital Health & Innovation and a community advisory board including the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care and the Arkansas affiliate of the American Heart Association.

“This study is all about the needs of patients and how, even when providers do a great job in our current health care system, they can’t always be available when the patient needs them,” Lefler said.

Her research will involve tracking 400 patients with heart failure over six months. Patients will be divided into two groups: those who receive standard care including regular in-person appointments and visiting the emergency room if necessary between, and those who are provided care through digital methods such as real-time health monitoring and appointments over video calls. Both sets of patients will receive in-home equipment to monitor blood pressure, weight and oxygen in the blood.

In comparing the two models, Lefler will be looking at both patient and provider satisfaction in terms of patients feeling confident in managing their condition and providers feeling able to treat their patients.

“These patients need help more than any patients in the nation because they have burdensome symptoms and frustrations in dealing with their disease. It’s also the most costly diagnosis out there, even when you consider cancer, because these patients are in the hospital frequently,” she said.

For 6.5 million Americans with heart failure, about 50% die within five years of diagnosis and, after hospitalization, 20% may die within a year.

“We’re not changing medical care in this study. All of our patients will be treated according to national heart failure guidelines,” Lefler said. “We’re looking at changing how that care is delivered, because we need a better model of care.”

The full cycle of the funding award is three years, which includes equipment purchase, participant recruitment, study and data analysis.

“This project was selected for PCORI funding not only for its scientific merit and commitment to engaging patients and other stakeholders, but also for its potential to fill an important gap in our health knowledge and give people information to help them weigh the effectiveness of their care options,” said Joe Selby, M.D., M.P.H., executive director of PCORI. “We look forward to following the study’s progress and working with UAMS to share the results.”

Lefler’s study was selected for PCORI funding through a highly competitive review process in which patients, clinicians and other stakeholders joined clinical scientists to evaluate the proposals. Applications were assessed for scientific merit, how well they will engage patients and other stakeholders, and their methodological rigor, among other criteria.

PCORI is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010. Its mission is to fund research that will provide patients, their caregivers and clinicians with the evidence-based information needed to make better-informed healthcare decisions. For more information about PCORI’s funding, visit [www.pcori.org](http://www.pcori.org).

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. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS’ clinical enterprise including its hospital, regional clinics and clinics it operates or staffs in cooperation with other providers. UAMS 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](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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