

UAMS News Bureau

Office of Communications & Marketing
4301 West Markham # 890
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

uamshealth.com/news



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Media Contacts:

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

Liz Caldwell, 501-686-8995
Wireless phone: 501-350-4364
liz@uams.edu

**UAMS Radiation Oncology Residency Program
Receives Accreditation**

LITTLE ROCK — The Radiation Oncology Residency program at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has received accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, which reviews all programs annually.

When efforts to launch the program began in 2017, there was no residency training for radiation oncology in the state, and Arkansas was one of the few states in the nation that didn't offer specialty training in radiation oncology.

“That meant that medical students who wanted to continue into the radiation oncology field had to leave Arkansas to do so, which also meant they were less likely to return to Arkansas to practice medicine, since statistics show physicians tend to practice close to where they complete residency,” said Fen Xia, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology and residency program director. “It also meant that it was difficult to recruit radiation oncologists from out of state.”

Radiation oncologists oversee the radiation treatments that are often a vital part of a patient's cancer treatment. During residency, physicians train beyond their medical school degrees in order to provide specialty treatment. The Department of Radiation Oncology is part of the UAMS College of Medicine.

The Radiation Oncology Residency accepts one resident a year. A fourth resident begins training in July 2021.

Xia said the process to start a new residency program is complicated and the success of this program was only possible with the effort of many people.

“Everyone from our staff and faculty all the way up to the Graduate Medical Education office and our dean in the College of Medicine were vital to making this possible. It was truly a team effort,” Xia said. “Imagine binders full of paperwork, but also understand that our faculty underwent a complete mindset shift in a short amount of time.

Previously, they only offered clinical care, but the entire team shifted to embrace the role of educator as well. The efforts of so many were truly remarkable.”

Molly Gathright, M.D., is associate dean for graduate medical education in the UAMS College of Medicine.

“Our office works with the residency programs to provide high-quality, leading examples in medical education and develop the faculty to effectively lead and manage excellent programs,” Gathright said. “Successful residencies are the result of healthy working alliances at all levels. We’re proud of the Radiation Oncology Residency program and believe it supports our primary mission, which is training the next generation of quality physicians.”

Xia said the residency emphasizes not only producing quality radiation oncologists, but encourages residents to give back by conducting cancer research and educating future physicians. The program’s small size enables residents to have one-on-one attention and mentorship. Residents average in the 97th percentile in national rankings.

Her next goal for the department and the College of Medicine is to introduce radiation oncology to students earlier in their medical careers so more students know it is an important option.

“We’re training the next generation of radiation oncologists for Arkansas and the entire country,” Xia said. “We have the responsibility and the duty to train physicians who are not only skilled in helping patients confront and survive a cancer diagnosis, but in helping them maintain quality of life throughout and treating the whole person, not just the cancer.”

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 or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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