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News Release
Aug. 12, 2020

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**Gohar Azhar, M.D., Invested in Jackson T. Stephens
Distinguished Chair in Geriatrics Clinical Affairs**

LITTLE ROCK — Gohar Azhar, M.D., a nationally recognized expert on cardiovascular aging research with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), was recently invested in the Jackson T. Stephens Distinguished Chair in Geriatrics Clinical Affairs.

“It is with deep humility that I accept the great honor of the Jackson T. Stephens Distinguished Chair,” Azhar said. “I pledge to fulfill the responsibilities that accompany this tremendous honor and to uphold the UAMS mission of excellence in clinical care, education and research to best serve all older adults in the state of Arkansas.”

Azhar is director of clinical research and co-director of cardiovascular aging research at the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, and a professor in the Department of Geriatrics in the UAMS College of Medicine. She leads the Walker Memory Center and provides geriatrics primary care at the Thomas and Lyon Longevity Clinic. Her clinical research includes the study of heart failure, memory disorders, delirium and functional outcomes in older adults in response to nutritional interventions.

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A distinguished chair is established with gifts of at least \$1 million, which are invested and the interest proceeds used to support the educational, research and clinical activities of the chair holder. Those named to a chair are among the most highly regarded scientists, physicians and professors in their fields.

“UAMS is grateful for the concern Jack Stephens had for the aging people of Arkansas and know this chair will enable improved services for patients,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA.

The chair was established with a gift from the late Arkansas businessman and philanthropist, Jackson T. Stephens, who appreciated the concept of utilizing a team of geriatrics specialists as the best care option for older patients. At the Reynolds Institute

on Aging, this chair supports ongoing services, encourages new treatment options at the Thomas and Lyon Longevity Clinic and enables in-service staff training.

“We are very appreciative of this investment from a visionary donor like Mr. Stephens,” said Angela Wimmer, vice chancellor of Institutional Advancement at UAMS. “Because of his generosity, UAMS has the resources it needs to recruit, retain and support leaders like Dr. Azhar to improve health outcomes for seniors.”

“Dr. Azhar brings broad clinical and scientific expertise as well as exceptional dedication to the care and wellbeing of older Arkansans to her important roles in the Reynolds Institute on Aging,” said Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., executive vice chancellor of UAMS and dean of the College of Medicine. “She will have even greater impact as the holder of the Jackson T. Stephens Distinguished Chair in Geriatrics Clinical Affairs.”

In addition to the honor of being named chair holder, Azhar received a commemorative medallion and an inscribed wooden chair. There was no formal investiture event held due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Azhar thanked all her family members including her grandparents. She also thanked Patterson, Westfall, Robert Wolfe, Ph.D., director of the Center for Translational Research in Aging and Longevity at the Reynolds Institute, and Jeanne Wei, M.D., Ph.D., the institute’s director, who mentored her in cardiovascular aging during her time at Harvard Medical School in Boston.

“The funds from this chair will be leveraged for advancing knowledge and finding pharmacological as well as non-pharmacological options for disorders of aging,” Azhar said. “The innumerable delicate connections between the aging organ systems, particularly the brain and heart, makes older adults particularly vulnerable. In the current era, we need the best of evidence-based and integrative medicine as well as cutting-edge basic research to combat the disorders of aging.”

Azhar also thanked her teachers, colleagues and students from whom she has learned and received support. She thanked her patients for inspiring her with their courage and optimism.

Azhar received her medical degree from Dow Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan, and received her postgraduate training at Aga Khan University in Pakistan. She completed an internship and residency in internal medicine at the Western Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh where she was recognized as outstanding resident and for excellence in ambulatory care. Subsequently, she completed an extended clinical and research fellowship as a physician-scientist at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the Division on Aging at Harvard Medical School.

Azhar has received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Harvard Nathan Shock Program to study the effects of stress on the heart and brain and was among the first to report on the age-associated changes in the older heart and brain in response to hypoxia-reoxygenation damage, or insufficient oxygen supply.

Azhar also conducted some of the first experiments on cardiac ischemia-reperfusion, or when blood returns too quickly to oxygen-deprived tissue. Using aging mouse models, she determined that the window of opportunity for intervention and salvaging of cardiac tissue was significantly shorter for the older adult heart. She was also involved in characterizing a transgenic model of delayed cardiac aging that was analogous to having

a “young heart in an old body.” She was the UAMS principal investigator on an NIH-funded clinical trial studying nutritional therapy in elderly adults with heart failure.

Azhar joined UAMS in 2002, where she has helped to significantly expand the physiological research laboratory and was instrumental in establishing a program to mentor students and junior faculty members in aging research. She has received various mentoring and physician awards, including the Red Sash Award.

Azhar has authored many peer-reviewed original publications and review articles in geriatrics. She has served on multiple national committees, including the executive branch of the Gerontological Society of America. She is co-directing a project to improve understanding of opioid use among older adults in the state and is evaluating determinants of health and longevity in Arkansans aged 90 and older.

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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