

News Release
Sept. 1, 2020

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 Awarded \$3.8 Million for National Research Center
To Study Effectiveness of Digital Health in Rural Health Care**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Digital Health & Innovation has received a four-year \$3.8 million grant from the federal Health Resources & Services Administration to establish a national research center. The center will examine the effectiveness of digital health in delivering health care in rural areas and hospitals.

The grant awards were announced Aug. 20 by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan at a news conference at the state Capitol.

“COVID-19 has limited many of our normal activities, such as visiting a doctor,” said Gov. Asa Hutchinson. “The internet and access to it has enabled many Arkansans to make virtual visits to a physician. This grant will help us to identify the best ways to deliver health care virtually and affordably across the state.”

The center will investigate how digital health practices affect patient outcomes and rural hospital profitability to inform rural hospitals about how best to use digital health in patient care.

“UAMS has been a national leader in digital health,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA. “The scope of this grant, which will fund research looking at data about digital health in other states also, is a recognition of what we have achieved so far. This digital health-focused research center is a natural fit with our Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. It will help us to continue that national leadership and demonstrate that we’ve earned it.”

Digital health has been a particular focus of Patterson since he joined UAMS in June 2018. The Institute for Digital Health & Innovation was established in early 2019.

“The data collected and our analyses will help inform policymakers and providers making decisions about rural health care across the country,” said Joseph Sanford, M.D., the institute’s interim director. “This grant has the potential to bring needed digital health support to rural hospitals and the communities that depend on them.”

UAMS Awarded \$3.8 Million to Evaluate Digital Health in Rural Areas

Page 2

Each year the project team will evaluate a different set of research areas. In the first year, it will:

- Assess how federal reimbursement policy for digital health remote patient monitoring affects hospital readmissions, lengths of stay and total annual health care costs.
- Review how obstetric digital health services are used, what their outcomes are and how spending on it differs by comparing two groups — high-risk pregnant women who receive digital health prenatal care and high-risk pregnant women who don't.
- Analyze the budget impact of a digital health program in addressing behavioral health needs in rural areas and the affordability of implementing it at other academic medical centers nationwide.
- Evaluate different models of delivering digital health stroke care and their impact on clinical outcomes and the quality of care.
- Study whether rural hospitals using digital health are more profitable than those that don't use it.

“What we discover about the effectiveness of digital health in addressing these issues will help legislators and other policymakers focus funding where it can be of the most use in helping rural hospitals and their patients,” said Hari Eswaran, Ph.D., the institute's director of research.

In its research, the center will work in collaboration with the university's College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy and College of Public Health.

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](#).

Like us, we're social:

