

UAMS News Bureau

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**Cargill Family's \$200,000 Gift Supports
UAMS Virmani Gait Laboratory
*Lab Studies Gait Issues among Parkinson's Patients***

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has received a \$200,000 gift from the late Bob and Sara Lou Cargill to support care for patients with brain diseases.

The gift will help support the Virmani Gait Laboratory, headed by Tuhin Virmani, M.D., Ph.D., co-director of the UAMS Movement Disorders Program and assistant professor in the Department of Neurology in the College of Medicine.

Scientists in the lab study gait issues among patients with Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disease of the central nervous system that leads to a deficiency of dopamine, a chemical in the brain important for movement. Specifically the lab focuses on freezing of gait, a phenomenon where Parkinson's patients feel like their feet are stuck to the ground.

"We greatly appreciate the generous gift to the Virmani Gait Lab from Bob and Sara Lou Cargill given by Mr. and Mrs. Lee," said Virmani. "This gift will help support our important work trying to figure out the causes of freezing of gait in people with Parkinson's disease, which hopefully will eventually lead to new treatments and cures for this difficult-to-treat symptom."

The Cargills were married for nearly 70 years, dedicating their lives to ministry, business, travel and philanthropy. Bob Cargill was pastor of five churches in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas for over 20 years. Sara Lou Cargill was an accomplished musician, playing the piano and organ wherever her husband pastored, working with young people and raising her family.

Starting out as a small-town preacher, Bob Cargill discovered he had a talent for raising money. At every town he preached in, he helped build a new church.

In 1976, the couple founded Cargill Associates, a fundraising consulting firm that has helped raise more than \$7 billion for churches, schools, colleges, universities and other

nonprofit organizations. Throughout their lives, the Cargills gave generously to many Christian causes and charitable organizations. Bob died in 2015 and Sara Lou in 2020.

Prior to their deaths, the couple earmarked funds for additional giving but did not specify where. Daughter Sara Beth Lee of Little Rock, and her husband, John, said it was an easy decision to designate the gift for UAMS and the Virmani Gait Lab.

“We are so fortunate to have this money to give on their behalf,” Sara Beth Lee said.

“We wanted to give specifically to someone who’s making a big difference for people with brain disease, and Dr. Virmani is doing that,” said John Lee.

The Lees understand brain disease all too well. Their late son, Robby, had epilepsy for 17 years, sometimes experiencing between 50 and 100 seizures a day.

John Lee has Parkinson’s disease, with a family history that includes his brother, cousin, uncle and grandfather. Years ago, after a follow-up visit for what he thought was nervousness, Lee’s doctor referred him to Virmani, who diagnosed him. Since then, Lee sees Virmani for follow-ups every six months and is a research participant in his lab.

“We really like Dr. Virmani a lot,” said John Lee. “He’s a whole different ballgame. He’s made the last eight years of my life really nice.”

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* recognized UAMS Medical Center as a Best Hospital for 2021-22; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide for the third year; and named five areas as high performing — colon cancer surgery, diabetes, hip replacement, knee replacement and stroke. *Forbes* magazine ranked UAMS as seventh in the nation on its Best Employers for Diversity list. UAMS also ranked in the top 30% nationwide on *Forbes*' Best Employers for Women list and was the only Arkansas employer included. UAMS has 2,876 students, 898 medical residents and six 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, 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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