

**UAMS News Bureau**

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

uamshealth.com/news



**News Release**

**Oct. 4, 2021**

**Media Contacts:**

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998

Wireless phone: 501-951-7260

[leslie@uams.edu](mailto:leslie@uams.edu)

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994

Wireless phone: 501-416-0354

[yavonda@uams.edu](mailto:yavonda@uams.edu)

**Jose Romero, M.D., Receives Mexico's Ohtli Award  
for His Efforts in Fight Against COVID-19**

LITTLE ROCK — Jose Romero, M.D., professor of Pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) who also serves as the Arkansas Secretary of Health and director of the Arkansas Department of Health, recently received the Ohtli Award, the highest award given by the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs to persons residing outside of Mexico.

“Dr. Romero was chosen for this award because of his relentless commitment to ensuring equal and free access to COVID-19 vaccines,” said Rodolfo Quilantan Arenas from the Mexican Consulate in Little Rock, who presented the award to Romero. “His service to the community has been invaluable.”

The name of the award comes from the Nahuatl word meaning “path,” alluding to the idea of opening a path for others. The Ohtli Award recognizes individuals who have aided, empowered or positively affected the lives of Mexican nationals in the United States and other countries.

Romero also is board-certified in pediatrics and pediatric infectious diseases. He is the immediate past chairman of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which is providing guidance nationally on the use of COVID-19 vaccine. He continues to be a non-voting member of the ACIP’s COVID-19 Vaccines Work Group. He is also a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on Infectious Diseases, and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials’ Infectious Diseases Policy Committee.

He previously served as chief medical officer at the Department of Health and was appointed as the interim Secretary of Health by Gov. Asa Hutchinson in July 2020. He was director of the Section of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at UAMS and Arkansas Children’s from 2008-2020.

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](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

Like us, we're social: 