

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS' Analiz Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., Selected
for Diversity in Clinical Trials Career Development Program**
Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation Sponsors Five-Year \$100 Million Initiative

LITTLE ROCK — The Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation (BMSF), along with its partners National Medical Fellowships and the American Association for Cancer Research, selected University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) neurosurgeon Analiz Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., to participate in its Diversity in Clinical Trials Career Development Program.

Rodriguez joins 51 other early-stage researchers as the first cohort of a five-year, \$100 million initiative that will eventually train 250 community-oriented clinical trialists by 2027.

“I’m awed by this inaugural group of clinicians, who have demonstrated their passion for and dedication to addressing the disparities in clinical research through community engagement,” said Robert Winn, M.D., director of the Massey Cancer Center at Virginia Commonwealth University and chair of the National Advisory Committee of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation Diversity in Clinical Trials Career Development Program.

A board-certified neurosurgeon who is part of the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Rodriguez is also an assistant professor in the College of Medicine’s Department of Neurosurgery and director of Neurosurgical Oncology.

“Dr. Rodriguez is an incredibly gifted surgeon who is committed to improving the health of her patients. The committee absolutely made the right decision in selecting her for this important program,” said J.D. Day, professor and chair of the Department of Neurosurgery.

The 52 physicians selected by an independent selection committee are an accomplished group working at a broad range of health care institutions in 22 states across the United States. The physicians include 34 women and 18 men who represent a diverse cross section of races and ethnicities and bring a widely varied perspective and range of experiences to the program, as well as to their therapeutic focus areas of cancer (hematologic or solid tumors), immunologic disorders and cardiovascular diseases.

Sponsored by the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, along with its implementation partner, National Medical Fellowships, and curriculum partner, the American Association for Cancer Research, the initiative is one of several different health equity and diversity and inclusion commitments made last year by the foundation and its donor, Bristol Myers Squibb.

“When they complete this program, these scholars will have the skills not only to conduct high impact clinical trials, but also to work within communities to build trust with at-risk populations, getting past the fear and skepticism that can often exist, to give the underserved better access to this important tool in health care research,” said Winn.

Research shows that nearly 80% of patients taking part in clinical trials in the U.S. are white. This program was launched to address this lack of diversity.

Through the program, participants will be trained as world-class clinical research scientists with additional knowledge, skills and competencies in effective community outreach and engagement. This new generation of physician investigators will have the potential to transform the clinical research landscape by conducting clinical trials designed with the goal of increasing the diversity of their participants.

“Dr. Rodriguez is working to bring novel therapies and clinical trials to Arkansas, which is a goal that is vitally important to the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute,” said Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., vice chancellor and director of the institute. “Diversity on all levels including faculty and clinical trials is a major goal for the Cancer Institute.”

Her research interests include multiomic characterization of brain tumors, functional precision medicine and cancer health disparities.

“It is such an honor to be selected for this program,” said Rodriguez. “As a clinician scientist, I see the need for more diversity in clinical trials, and I realize that correcting the imbalance isn’t an easy task. I am excited about learning how to better reach out to the community in order to ensure greater diversity in my research efforts.”

About the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation

The Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, an independent charitable organization, focuses on communities most at risk of suffering the impacts of serious diseases in regions of the world that are hardest hit. It empowers partners to develop and test innovative solutions to advance health equity and improve access to quality health care for patients. Grant making focuses on cancer, cardiovascular disease, and immunologic disease, as well as clinical trial diversity in the United States, and prevalent cancers in nine African countries, Brazil and China. The mission of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation is to promote health equity and improve the health outcomes of populations disproportionately affected by serious diseases by strengthening health care worker capacity, integrating medical care and community-based supportive services and mobilizing communities in the fight against disease.

About National Medical Fellowships

Seeking to empower and support aspiring physicians and health professionals underrepresented in medicine to contribute to the health of our nation, National Medical Fellowships' (NMF) mission is to provide scholarships and support for students underrepresented in medicine and the health professions.

Founded in 1946, NMF is one of America's first diversity organizations. Today, as the only national organization solely dedicated to providing scholarships to medical and health professions students in all groups underrepresented in healthcare, NMF is reducing health care disparities by creating new generations of clinicians and healthcare leaders who are dedicated to realizing health equity.

About the American Association for Cancer Research

Founded in 1907, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is the world's first and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure cancer. AACR membership includes 49,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and patient advocates residing in 128 countries. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise of the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer by annually convening more than 30 conferences and educational workshops. In addition, the AACR publishes nine prestigious, peer-reviewed scientific journals and a magazine for cancer survivors, patients, and their caregivers. The AACR funds meritorious research directly as well as in cooperation with numerous cancer organizations.

About UAMS

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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