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**For Second Year, UAMS Designated as a
Center of Excellence for Treating Huntington’s Disease**

LITTLE ROCK — The Huntington’s Disease Society of America has designated the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) a Center of Excellence for the treatment of Huntington’s Disease for the second year in a row.

“Continued designation as an HDSA Center of Excellence recognizes our multidisciplinary team’s commitment to providing care to people with Huntington’s disease,” said Tuhin Virmani, M.D., Ph.D., who co-directs the Huntington’s Disease Clinic at UAMS with Rohit Dhall, M.D. “More importantly, it allows us to continue to expand our outreach to more Huntington’s disease patients and their families across the state to fulfill this mission.”

The clinic operates a half-day each month as part of the UAMS Movement Disorders Clinic, which is directed by Virmani, an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Neurology. Dhall is a professor and vice chair of neurology and the director of neurodegenerative disorders at UAMS.

The society also awarded the UAMS program a grant of \$19,409 to support its medical and social services for Huntington’s disease families in Arkansas and the surrounding areas.

HDSA Centers of Excellence provide an elite multidisciplinary approach to Huntington’s disease care and research. The society has 55 such centers across the United States. UAMS was first awarded the designation in 2021 and is the only HDSA Center of Excellence in Arkansas.

At the centers, patients benefit from expert neurologists, psychiatrists, therapists, counselors and other professionals who have deep experience working with families affected by the disease and who work collaboratively to help families plan the best Huntington’s disease care program.

“The Huntington’s Disease Society of America is committed to supporting the best possible care for families affected by Huntington’s disease,” said Victor Sung, chair of

the HDSA's National Board of Trustees. "Continuing to expand the reach of the HDSA Centers of Excellence network allows more families across the country to have access to these world-class clinics."

Huntington's disease is a fatal genetic disorder that causes the progressive breakdown of nerve cells in the brain. It deteriorates a person's physical and mental abilities during their prime working years and has no cure. There are currently about 41,000 symptomatic Americans and more than 200,000 who are at risk of inheriting the disease, according to the HDSA. In Arkansas, Virmani estimates that there are 200 to 250 people with Huntington's disease, with about 40 of them currently seeking help at UAMS.

The symptoms of Huntington's disease can vary considerably but usually include personality changes, mood swings and depression; forgetfulness and impaired judgment; an unsteady gait and involuntary movements; and slurred speech, difficulty in swallowing and significant weight loss.

While there are no treatments that stop the disease's progression, there are supportive care resources and medications to help patients manage symptoms and to provide them with a better quality of life. There are continual advancements in care, with newer medications developed in recent years.

"People with Huntington's disease who obtain care at a HDSA Center of Excellence can feel reassured that they are obtaining the best possible care for themselves and their caregivers, as the disease in one member impacts everyone in the family," Virmani said.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a 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. 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 3,047 students, 873 medical residents and fellows, 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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