

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Researcher Receives Prestigious National Award,
\$1 Million to Support Falls Research in Older Adults**

LITTLE ROCK — Jennifer L. Vincenzo, Ph.D., MPH, PT, recently became the first University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) researcher to receive the national Paul B. Beeson Emerging Leaders Career Development Award in Aging, which comes with \$1 million over five years.

The award will support Vincenzo’s work implementing a falls prevention strategy as a standard of care for all older adults attending outpatient physical therapy clinics.

The Beeson award stems from an initiative by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the American Federation for Aging Research, and the John A. Hartford Foundation. Their aim is “to develop a cadre of talented scientists prepared and willing to take an active leadership role in transformative change that will lead to improved health care outcomes,” according to the American Federation for Aging Research website.

Vincenzo is only the third physical therapist to receive the award, which typically goes to medical doctors.

“I am honored to be a Beeson Scholar and represent UAMS,” said Vincenzo, an associate professor in the College of Health Professions Department of Physical Therapy. “This award will allow me to address the public health issues of falls among older adults, which are a leading cause of morbidity, mortality and decreased quality of life.”

The Beeson award will help her integrate her falls prevention self-management plan that she developed in the last three years with the STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries) toolkit developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The STEADI toolkit, established in 2012 for physicians to integrate falls prevention into daily practice, has not been widely adopted, but Vincenzo wants to

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change that. Her goal is to work with stakeholders to implement the integrated program as a standard of care in outpatient physical therapy clinics, starting at UAMS.

Vincenzo established her fall prevention self-management plan through work supported by a UAMS Translational Research Institute KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Award. She credits the KL2 support that began in 2019 as a key to her success. She received two years (plus a one-year extension) of salary support, research funding, and translational research training, including training in implementation science.

“I would not be where I am without the support of UAMS, the Translational Research Institute, and especially my colleagues in the Department of Physical Therapy,” she said. “The Beeson award will allow me to advance my knowledge and skills as an implementation scientist in aging under the mentorship of Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., and Jeanne Wei, M.D., Ph.D., who also served as mentors on my KL2.”

Curran is director of the UAMS Center for Implementation Research and professor of pharmacy practice in the College of Pharmacy. Wei is executive director of the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and chair of the Donald W. Reynolds Department of Geriatrics in the College of Medicine.

Translational Research Institute Director Laura James, M.D., said Vincenzo’s success is a great example of how the KL2 program can prepare talented early-career researchers and help them fast track their research programs.

“Dr. Vincenzo has seized on the opportunities provided by the KL2 program, developing and advancing a plan with significant promise for reducing falls among older adults,” said James, UAMS associate vice chancellor of Clinical and Translational Research. “She has also positioned herself for even greater success as a leader in her field.”

Vincenzo’s KL2 work led to state and national leadership appointments, including chair of the Balance and Falls Special Interest Group – American Physical Therapy Association-Geriatrics (APTA-G); and a member of the APTA-G Board. She is also chair of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging in Arkansas.

The KL2 program at the Translational Research Institute is supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences at the National Institutes of Health, Clinical and Translational Science Award KL2 TR003108.

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

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encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. 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 11,000 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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