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**UAMS' Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute Seeks Participants
for National, Multicenter Clinical Trial for Zoster Eye Disease**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' (UAMS) Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute seeks participants for a national, multicenter clinical trial concerning the varicella-zoster virus, also known as zoster eye disease or shingles of the eye.

The Zoster Eye Disease Study has received \$15 million in funding from the National Eye Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health. The study will help determine if prolonged low-dose antiviral treatment will reduce complications, such as blindness, for patients with the disease. More than 60 clinical centers nationwide and in Canada are participating in the study, including UAMS. The Jones Eye Institute is one of the leading enrollers for the study.

“The Jones Eye Institute is a national leader in the Zoster Eye Disease Study,” said David Warner, M.D., an ophthalmologist with the Eye Institute and principal investigator for the study at UAMS. “We are committed to participating in cutting-edge research to improve the treatment and lives of Arkansans, and help set new standards for the world.”

Study participants are given valacyclovir, an antiviral drug, or a placebo. Valacyclovir is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for prolonged low-dose treatment of certain infections caused by herpes simplex virus, a different but related herpes virus. Prolonged suppressive antiviral treatment is now the standard care for eye disease caused by herpes simplex virus. The study will determine its effectiveness as a treatment for the varicella-zoster virus.

Shingles of the eye can happen to anyone who has had the varicella-zoster virus, better known as chickenpox. Most people in the United States who are 40 years old or older have had chickenpox. After a person has chickenpox, the virus stays in the body and lays dormant in the nerve cells. At some point later in life, the immune system may weaken, allowing the virus to become active again and cause shingles, sometimes in the eye and sometimes in other parts of the body. Shingles usually causes a painful rash with blisters on one side of the body.

About a million people in the U.S. develop shingles each year. Although the risk of shingles increases with age, the largest number of cases occurs in people in their 50s.

The varicella-zoster virus can infect the nerves of the eye and cause problems, such as a rash on one or both eyelids on the same side of the face, conjunctivitis or “pink eye,” blurry vision, sensitivity to light, swelling of the optic nerve and blindness. Treatment usually includes antiviral medications, eye drops, cool compresses and pain medications.

Adults who have had a typical skin rash around the eye and have had active zoster eye disease in the last year are encouraged to enroll in the study. Patients whose condition has been stable for the past year, or patients who have poor kidney function or a weakened immune system due to other disease or treatment are not eligible. Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who use certain forms of birth control are also not eligible for the study.

For more information or to enroll in the study, call 501-296-1156.

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. 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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