

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute
Awarded Five New Grants from National Cancer Institute**

LITTLE ROCK — Researchers at the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) have been awarded five new grants from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in 2024, totaling \$4.6 million.

New grants include:

- \$3.3 million NCI grant to create a Melanoma Resistance Evolution Atlas, Principal Investigator: Alan Tackett, Ph.D., Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute deputy director
- \$421,000 NCI grant to study cancer-evolved resistance mechanism to enhance adoptive T-cells, Principal Investigators: Tackett and Brian Koss, Ph.D., UAMS assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology
- \$393,000 NCI grant to study the mechanisms of TH17-DC immunotherapy for ovarian cancer. Principal Investigator: Martin Cannon, Ph.D., UAMS professor of microbiology and immunology
- \$393,000 NCI grant to study SR-A as a therapeutic target in breast cancer. Principal Investigators: Steven Post, Ph.D., UAMS professor of pathology, and Behjatolah Karbassi, Ph.D., UAMS associate professor of pathology
- \$153,000 NCI grant to study the development of immunocompetent melanoma brain metastases organoids. Principal Investigator: Analiz Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., UAMS associate professor of neurosurgery

The multimillion-dollar increase in highly competitive cancer research funding in less than three months comes on top of an existing \$11.5 million COBRE grant awarded to UAMS in March by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish the [Center for Molecular Interactions in Cancer](#).

UAMS has significantly strengthened its cancer research talent pool with the nationwide recruitment of 24 new cancer researchers since 2020.

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“We’re making tremendous progress in meeting the research funding threshold that NCI requires of its designated cancer centers,” said Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute and UAMS vice chancellor. “To receive five grants from NCI in this short amount of time is rare.”

NCI designation is a highly competitive assessment process during which cancer centers must demonstrate outstanding depth and breadth of high-quality cancer research and treatment. Receiving designation brings substantial benefits, including the ability to access significant federal research funding and offer novel clinical trials not available to non-designated centers.

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 eight 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, Institute for Digital Health & Innovation and the Institute for Community 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 3,275 students, 890 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 12,000 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](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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