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**News Release
July 1, 2024**

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**UAMS Invests Marjan Boerma, Ph.D.,
in J. Thomas May Distinguished Endowed Chair in Oncology**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Pharmacy invested Marjan Boerma, Ph.D., director of the UAMS College of Pharmacy Division of Radiation Health and associate director of basic science in the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, in the J. Thomas May Distinguished Endowed Chair in Oncology in a June 25 ceremony.

“I’d like to thank you all for being here. This month marks my 20th anniversary at UAMS, and you are all the reason why I’ve reached this milestone,” said Boerma. “I think about how we come from different corners of the world, and now coming together here today, working together, is exactly what makes us so strong — you’ve created a home for me here for all these years, and I’m very thankful.”

Boerma is a renowned expert in detection and treatment of cancer, and her research is aimed at understanding biological mechanisms by which ionizing radiation causes normal tissue injuries and using that information to identify therapeutic interventions to prevent or treat the injury. In addition to her current roles, Boerma is also the director of the UAMS COBRE Center for Studies of Host Response to Cancer Therapy and the Cancer Institute’s Radiation Biology Shared Resource.

“Endowed chairs and professorships are the highest honors that an academic institution can confer upon its scholars. They represent our ability to acknowledge and support those individuals who have contributed the most and will continue to contribute to our mission to improve the health and health care in the state of Arkansas,” said Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, UAMS chancellor and CEO of UAMS Health. “Congratulations to Dr. Boerma for everything that she has accomplished and everything that she has done to mentor, promote science and advance UAMS.”

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A distinguished chair is established with gifts of at least \$1.5 million, which are invested and the interest proceeds used to support the educational, research

and clinical activities of the chair holder. Those named to a chair are among the most highly regarded scientists, physicians and professors in their fields.

The chair was established in 2006 by a \$1 million gift from the late William E. “Bill” Clark, who was chairman and CEO of CDI Contractors in Little Rock, and his wife Margaret Clark. It was elevated to a distinguished chair by a gift from Margaret Clark, and her son, William E. Clark II, in 2016. The chair was named in honor of J. Thomas “Tommy” May of Pine Bluff, former CEO of Simmons First National Corp., whose extensive history of civic and community service reflects his dedication to education, health care and community development in Arkansas. Clark and May became good friends when the two served together for nine years on the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees.

“The Clark family established and elevated this chair, and that says a lot about what they think about the people of Arkansas and UAMS. Everyone here is deeply grateful, not just for this chair, but for everything the Clark family has done for Arkansas,” said Patterson. “I also wanted to acknowledge one of the most important people in Arkansas, Tommy May, because without him none of this would be possible.”

Boerma received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in cellular biology from Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands. In 2004, she obtained a doctorate in radiation biology from Leiden University in the Netherlands. In her thesis work, she used animal and cell culture models to investigate biological mechanisms of radiation-induced heart disease, an adverse side effect of radiation therapy.

In 2004, she joined the laboratory of Martin Hauer-Jensen, M.D., Ph.D., in the UAMS Department of Surgery to continue her research into radiation-induced heart disease on a postdoctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association. In 2006, she obtained a position as assistant professor in the UAMS College of Pharmacy, and in 2008 joined the newly established UAMS College of Pharmacy Division of Radiation Health created by Hauer-Jensen, who was invested in the J. Thomas May Distinguished Endowed Chair in Oncology in 2016.

“This chair, which resides in the Cancer Institute, is one of the great honors that a Cancer Institute director can participate in, and it is very well deserved,” said Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., UAMS vice chancellor and director of the Cancer Institute. “Dr. Boerma could not be a better suited individual for this position — she’s an accomplished scientist with a fully functional lab generating spectacular science and publishing in the highest impact journals, all which have been nothing short of outstanding.”

Boerma, in close collaboration with Amrita Cheema, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Oncology and the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University, is also involved in work to identify biomarkers that predict the development of radiation injuries in individuals at risk. Her research is applied to improve the efficacy and safety of cancer therapy, to the adverse effects of accidental radiation exposure, and to risks of

cardiovascular disease from exposure to radiation in space missions. She has co-authored more than 140 scientific articles and book chapters in these areas, and her research funding has been provided by the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the American Cancer Society, and other federal and private funding sources.

“I am very fortunate to have collaborated with Marjan for over a decade, and it has led to multiple extramural grants, many publications together and now we are jointly exploring a commercialization approach to create invitro diagnostics that will improve outcomes for cancer patients,” said Cheema. “In doing all this great work, I’ve also found a great friend who is fun to spend time with, and someone who is very kind and inspirational. My many congratulations to you Marjan.”

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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