**UAMS News Bureau**

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**News Release**
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# UAMS Kidney, Liver Transplant Programs Receive National Honors for Improving Rural Access

LITTLE ROCK — The kidney and liver transplant programs at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) were honored with the prestigious John M. Eisenberg Award for Local Achievement in Patient Safety and Quality from The Joint Commission and National Quality Forum.

"We are thrilled about this recognition of our solid organ transplant team," said Michelle Krause, M.D., MPH, senior vice chancellor for UAMS Health and chief executive officer for UAMS Medical Center. "This is a testament to the creation of our statewide health system under the UAMS Health umbrella in October 2019. Thanks to UAMS Health, patients across Arkansas have access to specially trained health care teams and expert care that's not typically available outside major metropolitan cities."

Katelyn Faust, MSN, RN, the transplant program's quality and process improvement manager, attended the inaugural UNIFY conference in Washington, D.C., and accepted the award on behalf of UAMS Health on Sept. 16.

The UAMS Health program was recognized for improving access to organ transplantation for underserved rural communities in Arkansas. The UAMS Health Solid Organ Transplant Program established satellite transplant clinics in El Dorado, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Pine Bluff and Texarkana to improve access to care for patients around the state and reduce the need for costly travel to UAMS clinics in central Arkansas.

"These satellite clinics are strategically located in regions with the highest concentrations of transplant patients," said Lyle Burdine, M.D., Ph.D., director of solid organ transplants at UAMS. "By going out into the state to meet our patients, rather than asking them to come to Little Rock, we are not only improving our patients' quality of life, but we are also adding years to their life as well.

"This has been a nurse-driven initiative, and our outcomes reflect the commitment and passion of the entire solid organ transplant team," he said, thanking Nursing Director Joy

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Cope, MSN, MBA-HCM, RN; Clinical Services Manager Donna Reppond, MSN, RN; Faust; and the entire transplant nursing team.

“They provided transplant-specific training to staff at our Little Rock campus and the regional sites and increased community engagement by distributing educational materials and hosting awareness events,” Burdine said. “We’ve also used technology to improve provider communication and lab integration for same-day results and alerts.”

As a result of these efforts:

- Referrals increased by 101%.
- Time between referral and evaluation decreased by 40 days.
- Time from evaluation to being added to the transplant waitlist decreased by 39 days.
- Post-transplant hospital stay decreased from five to three days.
- Additions to the patient waitlist increased by 106%.

This UAMS Health initiative has greatly enhanced care accessibility and efficiency for rural transplant patients and has been sustained through continuous training, data tracking and community engagement, the Joint Commission and National Quality Forum said.

The Eisenberg Award panel selected UAMS Health for this award based on the following strengths:

- Thie initiative’s innovative approach using satellite clinics, which improved access for vulnerable, underserved and rural populations.
- UAMS’ bold vision and leadership.
- The model’s potential to be applied to other specialized services and conditions, especially in rural health care settings.
- The timeliness of this work in light of a recent federal focus on transplant access for rural populations.

UAMS performed the state’s first kidney transplant in 1964 and the state’s first liver transplant in 2005 and is currently home to Arkansas’ only adult kidney and liver transplant center. Since these programs began, the UAMS Organ Transplant team has performed more than 3,120 kidney transplants and more than 660 liver transplants. In late 2023, UAMS became the first hospital in the state to perform kidney-pancreas transplants since the 1990s.

The Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) evaluates the 256 kidney transplant and 150 liver transplant programs across the country, and UAMS ranked first in the country in the survivability category and fourth in the country overall.

“A key element of the success of our transplant programs is the effective team structure at UAMS, enabling the delivery of world-class care comparable to any top-tier hospital in the United States,” said Burdine. “Transplantation is a highly specialized field, inherently reliant on the seamless collaboration of various hospital departments.”

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 3,485 students, 915 medical residents and fellows, and seven 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, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube or Instagram.

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