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**UAMS Researcher Receives \$3.6 million NIH Grant
to Study Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease**

LITTLE ROCK — Yunmeng Liu, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Medicine Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), has received a \$3.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Liu’s laboratory will investigate how metabolic abnormalities of immune cells during diabetes contribute to the development of high blood pressure and damage the heart and kidneys. She plans to understand why diabetes promotes cardiovascular disease and renal injury, which often occur as co-morbidities in diabetic patients.

The long-term goal of her project is to identify innovative therapeutic strategies that target immune-metabolic pathways to prevent or treat both diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The five-year grant from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases, which is part of the NIH, provides about \$3.6 million in total funding to support Liu’s innovative research program. She called it “a significant milestone for our lab.”

Steven Webber, M.D., dean of the UAMS College of Medicine, said Liu’s funding proposal, entitled “Metabolic Rewiring of T Cells Bridges Diabetes to Hypertension,” received an exceptional impact score that “reflects the scientific rigor, originality, and translational significance of her work, and signals her growing national recognition as an independent investigator in the field of cardiometabolic immunity.”

The award, which will be distributed in annual increments of about \$717,000, builds on Liu’s extensive prior contributions to immune and cardiovascular research, and “positions Liu’s laboratory to make important advancements at the intersection of metabolism, immunity, and organ injury,” said Nancy J. Rusch, Ph.D., department chair. “Her work complements and strengthens UAMS’ expanding portfolio in cardiometabolic

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research, further enhancing the institution's leadership in this critical area of public health.”

Liu thanked her collaborators at UAMS, saying they were instrumental to the proposal's success. They are Shengyu Mu, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of pharmacology and toxicology; Lin-Xi Li, Ph.D., an associate professor of microbiology and immunology; Lu Huang, Ph.D., a former assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, now at Boston University; and Steven Post, Ph.D., who recently retired as a professor of pathology.

She also acknowledged members of her laboratory for their contributions and commitments to the project: Katherine Deck, Christoph Mora, Tonya Rafferty, Madison Clements, Priya Yadav, Grace Bing, Faith Stephens, and Sydney Greene.

“This award marks an important step forward in Dr. Liu's independent research career and underscores the department's growing strength in cardiometabolic science,” Webber said. “This is a remarkable achievement that promises to drive meaningful advances in our understanding and treatment of diabetes-related cardiovascular and kidney disease.”

This research was supported by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health under award number R01DK145683.

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 3,553 students and 1,015 medical residents and fellows. It is the state's largest public employer with about 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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