

UAMS News Bureau

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**Samuel Bledsoe, M.D., James ‘J.J.’ Tucker, M.D., Join UAMS
to Expand Bariatric Surgery Care Across Arkansas**

LITTLE ROCK — Bariatric and general surgeons Samuel Bledsoe, M.D., and James “J.J.” Tucker, M.D., are joining the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), effective Oct. 1, and will see patients at the health system’s newly acquired hospital in Bryant.

Both surgeons join UAMS from Encore Medical Center, a 53-licensed bed facility previously owned by Arkansas Heart Hospital that UAMS will begin leasing and operating on Oct. 1.

“We are delighted to welcome Dr. Bledsoe and Dr. Tucker to UAMS,” said Lyle Burdine, M.D., Ph.D., interim chair of surgery at UAMS. “These well-respected surgeons will continue to provide Central Arkansas and beyond with the exceptional bariatric and surgical care they are known for.”

Samuel Bledsoe, M.D.

Bledsoe is a board-certified general surgeon who also holds the American Board of Surgery’s Focused Practice Designation in Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, recognizing his additional expertise and focused practice in bariatric and metabolic care. He founded the Arkansas Heart Hospital Bariatric & Metabolic Institute and has served as its medical director since 2017. He has also served as chief medical officer and chief of surgery at Encore Medical Center since the Bryant hospital’s inception.

“It is an honor to join UAMS, Arkansas’s flagship academic medical institution. I am grateful for the experience I have gained building and growing a successful bariatric program, and I am excited to bring that experience to UAMS,” said Bledsoe. “We already care for patients from communities throughout Arkansas, and I look forward to working with the team at UAMS to expand our program, broaden access to care, and serve even more patients across the state.”

He graduated from Bob Jones University in South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science pre-med degree before earning his medical degree from UAMS. He completed a general

surgery residency at Carraway Methodist Medical Center in Birmingham, Alabama, and another one at Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham.

Currently the president-elect for the Arkansas Medical Society, Bledsoe is a fellow of both the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery and of the American College of Surgeons. He will be a professor in the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Surgery.

James “J.J.” Tucker, M.D.

Originally from Hot Springs, Tucker is a board-certified general and bariatric surgeon who joined the Arkansas Heart Hospital in 2020. Prior to that, he served as chair of the Department of Surgery and vice chief of staff at National Park Medical Center in Hot Springs.

“I am honored to join the UAMS team and continue caring for patients in Bryant and across Central Arkansas,” said Tucker. “UAMS brings academic resources, research, and a statewide network that will strengthen what we have already built in bariatric and general surgery. This partnership gives our patients more support, more continuity, and a clear path to expand high-quality metabolic and bariatric care for years to come.”

Tucker graduated from the University of Arkansas with a bachelor’s degree in finance before earning his medical degree at the American University of the Caribbean in St. Maarten. He did his surgical residency at York Hospital, part of WellSpan Health, in York, Pennsylvania, before completing a minimally invasive surgical fellowship at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge.

Tucker is a fellow with the American College of Surgeons and the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgeons. He will be an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine Department of Surgery.

Both Bledsoe and Tucker are accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment, please call 501-252-6650, effective Oct. 1.

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 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 1,030 medical residents and fellows, and two dental residents. 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](#).