



Issue 18, January 2023

Message from the Chairman



In Memoriam: Susan Smyth, M.D., Ph.D

It is with great sadness that we share that Susan Smyth, Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of the College of Medicine, passed away on December 31, 2022.

Dean Smyth joined UAMS in 2021. She was a cardiologist and translational researcher that was respected and admired by her peers nationally. She joined us from the University of Kentucky where she served as Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine and Director of the Gill Heart and Vascular Institute. Dean Smyth was a member of a number of organizations such as the American Society for Clinical Investigation, former president of the Association of University Cardiologists, and served on the CTSA Steering Committee for the National Center for Advancing Translational Science. Dean Smyth's

research focused on atrial and venous thrombosis and resulted in over 200 publications and contributions to a number of textbooks.

Dean Smyth's educational journey began at Mount Holyoke College in south Hadley, Massachusetts where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in biology. She earned both her medical degree and Ph.D. in pharmacology from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She went on to complete her residency in internal medicine at University Medical Center in Stony Brook, New York as well as cardiology fellowships at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York and the University of North Carolina.

Once joining UAMS, Dean Smyth quickly began to make an impact on the College of Medicine, UAMS, and the health of the state. She strived for excellence in improving the college's national standings, health equity and diversity of the college, and all aspects of education, research, and clinical care. Dean Smyth was invested in the UAMS Arkansas Medical Society Distinguished Dean's Chair in November where her husband, Andrew, was invested in the Mehta Stebbins Chair in Cardiovascular.

We are grateful for the impact left by Dean Smyth and will strive to live out her legacy. Our sincerest thoughts go out to her husband, Dr. Andrew Morris, and her sons, Edward and William.

To honor the life and legacy of Dean Smyth, UAMS has established the Fund for Excellence in Medicine. Dean Smyth was passionate about the diversity of our college and increasing scholarship for promising medical students. If you would like to donate to the [Dean Susan Smyth, M.D., Ph.D., Fund for Excellence in Medicine](#) [click here](#).

Dean Susan Smyth, M.D., Ph.D., Fund for Excellence in Medicine



Go Red for Women in 2022



Dean Smyth's investiture in the Arkansas Medical Society Distinguished Dean's Chair surrounded by Stephanie Gardner, Chancellor Cam Patterson, and members of the Arkansas Medical Society



Dean Smyth celebrating College of Medicine MVPs Natalie Moore and Dr. Aaron Wenger with Dr. Yeh



Words from Dr. Paulette Mehta

I was fortunate to meet regularly with Dr Smyth in my role as Editor-in-Chief of "Medicine and Meaning", the literary journal of UAMS created shortly before her arrival. She was enthusiastic about the journal, lauding the creative talents of the contributing students, faculty, staff, and friends of UAMS and she contributed an interview to the summer/fall 2021 issue (#4). In this interview, she discussed her plans for the future especially in regard to excellence in education, town-gown rapport, and equity in education and care. She also shared her love of nature and her support of the humanities in the practice of medicine. Subsequently, I asked her to review selected articles for the journal for which she always provided invaluable insight. Despite the infinite demands on her time, she always had time for collegiality and for the journal. I am proud to have known Susan and regret how quickly our time together passed. Nevertheless, her contributions will be a lasting legacy to UAMS and to those who knew her.

Words from Dr. Jay Mehta

Susan, rest in peace, we love you.

I was so delighted to know from UAMS Chancellor Dr. Cam Patterson about 18 months ago that Dr. Susan Smyth had been recruited to you UAMS as Dean and Executive Vice Chancellor. I could not have been more delighted to know that a prominent cardiologist from Kentucky would be coming to UAMS. She was recruited to UAMS along with her husband Andrew Morris who is also a prominent basic scientist. This was a dream team coming to our institution.

I went to felicitate Dr Smyth soon after she arrived. I was twice as delighted to know that we both had been selected as Senior VA clinician scientists- so she would be working part-time at to our affiliate VA Medical Center. Susan would soon turn out to be a clinician in that she attended on the cardiology service at the VA Medical Center on weekends and weekdays, something never would I have expected a busy Dean and Executive Vice Chancellor to be doing.

To get to know Dr. Smyth and her husband better, my wife Paulette and I invited them to our home for dinner which they readily accepted. We had wonderful evening getting to know each other better and talking about the challenges the Medical Center faced. She very much appreciated the counsel. She talked about having joint lab meetings because of our common interests – something we would have gotten to had she lived long enough.

We had another wonderful experience of having her at our home when she came with her aging mother to take part in a book signing (Heart Disease- It is all in your head) ceremony. She bought a book not just for herself, but for her mother as well.

Of course, she was very active in many administrative and management responsibilities of her post. A example of her involvement in helping young faculty grow, was her involvement in mentoring Dr. Nishank Jain, an upcoming nephrologist—scientist, along with Dr. Jerry Ware, Professor of Physiology, Dr. John Arthur, Division Chief Nephrology, and myself on regular basis. Through this mentorship, Dr Jain received a KL2 award, and is preparing submissions to the NIH and the AHA.

In November 2022, Dr. Andrew Morris received the Mehta/Stebbins Chair in Cardiovascular Research, and we had a wonderful investiture ceremony. Dr Smyth presented herself as a dignified Dean and a proud wife. We were planning to have celebratory dinner together, but her unfortunate demise will not let us have this opportunity.



Words from Dr. Paul Mounsey

Although we only had a short time to get to know Susan, her leadership was inspirational and her concern for our patients, faculty and trainees was obvious. I am sure you are all aware of the lasting impact she made in many areas but I will remember her for her commitment to the health care of all Arkansans. Also her interest in issues surrounding women in medicine and DEI were obvious to all. She was keen and ready to step in (at short notice on occasion) to support our clinical services both at UAMS and at the VA. I had the opportunity to meet with her regularly to discuss issues surrounding the cardiovascular service line and the division of cardiology, and I always greatly appreciated her insights and guidance from her vast experience of management of academic cardiology and research. We will all miss her greatly.



Words from Dr. Hakan Paydak

It is my deepest sorrow and sadness that we lost one of the most precious, thoughtful, kind and caring members of our Division of Cardiology at UAMS and at the CAVHS on New Year's Day.

I got to know Dean Smyth very well when I followed her administrative assistant's husband as a cardiology/ep consultant about a year ago. She was so caring and kind that she answered all of my calls and text messages regarding this patient.

I then gave her heads up about one of my senior medical students who wanted to go into Cardiology, before he started his rotation with her at UAMS cardiology consults. She

gave him the utmost education and attention that I am sure this student will definitely go into Cardiology in the future.

At the graduation of the COM, last May, she sincerely and bravely shared the story of her long lasting battle with cancer with the graduating students and everybody in attendance including us, the faculty. She didn't have to share her personal history but she wanted to because she wanted to inspire all of those graduating medical students to be fearless but kind like herself. After the medical students at UAMS did their first podcast interview with me, she apparently listened to it from the beginning till the end and send me a very kind message telling me that my podcast interview was inspirational for the medical students. This is by far the best compliment I have ever received from the UAMS and COM administration over the last 14 years that I have been here.

She worked diligently up until this Christmas. She thanked me with dignity and gratitude when I volunteered to cover the consultation services at the VA on her behalf. That Friday was when I last saw her while she was entering UAMS. I wish I had given her a wholehearted hug.

Before the New Year, I dropped our belated Family Christmas and New Year's Card to her office like I did to many of your mailboxes last week, without knowing that we would be hearing the following sad message from Chancellor Dr. Patterson the following day. My heart is broken while I am writing to you these lines.

In a short period of time at UAMS and the CAVHS, she did revolutionary changes for Women in Cardiology and Medicine, for diversity and for our medical students, residents and fellows who rotated with her both at UAMS and at the VA. I know that she collaborated with our research guru Dr. Mehta, to continue her high quality research efforts that defined her, throughout her career. She literally put her hands under the bus when she volunteered to cover Cardiology/EP consults at the VA, one week at a time, when Dr. Uretsky was all by himself to take care of this enormous service last July. Most importantly, she did all of this while fighting with cancer. As the famous Turkish poet Nazim HikmetcRan said: "She welcomed death from wherever it was coming from!", with dignity, kindness and a smiley face.

Words from Dr. Rushita Bagchi

Kind, nurturing, fearless, brilliant, hopeful... one could keep going on and on, but there will not be enough words to describe the persona of Dr. Susan Smyth. I first met her in September 2021 during my interview. She welcomed me into her office, and we just chatted- it did not feel like an interview at all. The conversation was about our shared tastes in tea (English Breakfast, in particular), gourmet treats, music (P!nk, of course), and science. Towards the end of our meeting, she took her business card, wrote her cellphone number on it, and handed it over to me asking me to reach out to her for anything I needed- this is in my wallet even today. I had never felt so at ease in the company of someone in a 'big' office before. I was allowed to be who I was, and it felt like I had known her forever. I believe that I echo the feelings of many others who have had similar experiences with her. She didn't just leave an impression; she left a lasting one!

I met her several times after, and at every single instance, there was something new that I learned from Dr. Smyth. She would always say that we were all learning something new every day. It wasn't any different when I met her on December 28th, 2022, which little did we know would be her last day at work. Through my interactions with her over the past year, I realized that she was not just any visionary but one with a laser-sharp focus on the goals that needed to be accomplished. She fought to turn dreams into reality till her very last breath. From her, I have learned to be fearless in our imaginations, to set the bar high for what we aspire for, to challenge ourselves every day to be better at what we do, and most importantly, to be a better version of ourselves.

For the past few weeks before she left us, we shared a strange unsaid understanding. Every day, she was fighting to live another day and complete unfinished tasks. It hurt to see that, but I respected her too much and seeing what she was trying to do, I asked no questions at all. On New Year's Eve, I lost a genuine mentor, a friend, and a mother-like figure from my life. I know that I will not see her again. Surely enough, she won't be pulling up a chair next to me to sit and ask me how I was doing or what I was thinking. But in her own way, she will continue to light my path forward and be a source of inspiration, positivity, and courage for the rest of my life.

Dr. Smyth, I miss you!



Dean Smyth in the lab with Dr. Rushita Bagchi and other lab members.

Words from Dr. Desislava Marinkova Kaloyanov

I met Dr. Susan Smyth for the first time on September 4th, 2019, at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Smyth was part of the UK Women in Medicine and Science and invited Dr. Nanette Wegner and organized the meeting with her. I had the wonderful opportunity to be part of the roundtable discussion with Dr. Wenger and to meet for the first time this remarkable lady-Dr. Smyth. During this time, I was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Kentucky, Department of Physiology. Since our first meeting, I could say that Susan (she introduces herself as Susan) was an incredible lady and a real and good human, after all.

Last year I had the amazing opportunity to become her postdoctoral scholar and for me it is an honor to work in her lab. She was a remarkable mentor, and despite her duties as a Dean at UAMS, she ever was finding time to work with us shoulder by shoulder on the projects in the lab.

She loved science and data, and she appreciated very much our work in the lab. I remember that till the last days in the lab, I was seeing some of my data in her folder every time when we had lab-meetings (we used to have lab meetings each Friday). This makes me happy and inspires me for more results and to be thirsty for science. These days it is very rare and even impossible to find that kind of mentor/supervisor, like Susan, and only people who had the happiness and luck to work with her and to be close to her could understand.

I was at her awarding ceremony for Investiture of recipient of Arkansas Medical Society Distinguished Dean's Chair November 9th, 2022. Her speech was amazing and inspiring.

She loved animals, she had two dogs and I think that she had a cat in Kentucky. Susan has never shown any weakness and never complained. I am very sad that we lost her suddenly, I am still in shock and cannot believe that she is not among us.

We had a good tradition in the lab to prepare some traditional meals during the holidays, as Thanksgiving Day, or around Christmas. Also, to celebrate the Birthdays in the lab.

She will be missed a lot for everyone, which were around her.



Post doctoral fellow Dr. Desislava Marinkova Kaloyanov in the lab with Dean Smyth

Join the Division of Cardiology for their next Cardiac Club Lecture on Tuesday, February 7th!

For registration and more information click [here](#).



UAMS
SAVE THE DATE
**CARDIAC
CLUB**

**TUESDAY,
FEB. 7, 2023
6-8 P.M.**

Attend in person or virtually

12th floor, UAMS Jackson T. Stephens
Spine & Neurosciences Institute

“VT Ablation in 2023”

Auras R. Atreya, M.D., MPH

Assistant Professor

Division of Cardiovascular Medicine

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

For registration and more information,
visit [UAMS.cloud-cme.com](https://uams.cloud-cme.com).

The Department of Internal Medicine is the largest department in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. The department is home to approximately 150 full-time faculty members, 81 residents, and 68 fellows serving two residency programs and twelve fellowship programs. Dr. Edward T.H. Yeh, a cardiologist and physician/scientist, is a pioneer in the field of onco-cardiology.

Questions, comments, or suggestions for future newsletters? Email Shelby Shields at SMS Shields@uams.edu or Natalie Moore at NMoore@uams.edu.

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