

Editor's Note: This archived PDF version of the e-newsletter does not precisely match the layout of the original email version. However, most of the links to external articles and other content remain active.



July 2021

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Championing the Vaccine in the ER



An idea for increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates in Arkansas while providing an educational experience for College of Medicine students has proven successful on both fronts. [READ MORE](#)

In the Spotlight

Congratulations to our Newly Invested Faculty Members!

Endowed Chairs Honor New Holders & Faculty Colleagues Who Inspired Gifts



Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of **Internal Medicine**, Vice Chancellor and Director of the **Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute**, was invested July 15 in the **Kent C. Westbrook, M.D.**, Director's Chair for the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute. Dr. Birrer was honored for his scholarly work and past career accomplishments as well as his ongoing dedication to attaining National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation for UAMS.

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Jennifer Laudadio, M.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of **Pathology**, was invested July 22 in the **Aubrey J. Hough Jr., M.D.**, Distinguished Chair in Pathology. Dr. Laudadio was honored for her contributions on the faculty since 2013 and her leadership as Chair since 2020 amid the many challenges of the pandemic.

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New Faculty

These are some of the many faculty colleagues joining the College of Medicine this summer and fall. We will continue to introduce new faculty members in the months ahead. A warm welcome to all!



Daniel Bingham, M.D., has joined the Department of **Anesthesiology** as an Assistant Professor.
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Elizabeth Blankenship, M.D., has joined the Department of **Anesthesiology** as an Assistant Professor.
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Will McSpadden, M.D., has joined the Department of **Anesthesiology** as an Assistant Professor.
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Blake Plyler, M.D., has joined the Department of **Anesthesiology** as an Assistant Professor.
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Scott Lucchese, M.D., has joined the Department of **Neurology** as an Associate Professor.
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Nicholas Zoumbros, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pathology** as an Assistant Professor in the **Dermatopathology** Division.
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J. Stephen Nix, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pathology** as an Assistant Professor in the **Surgical** Division.

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Michella Whisman, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pathology** as an Assistant Professor in the **Surgical** Division.

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Courtney Cox, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Critical Care Medicine**.

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Maher Abulfaraj, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Emergency Medicine**.

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Ebaa Jastaniah, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Emergency Medicine**.

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Erica Liebelt, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as a Professor and Medical and Research Director of **Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology** in the Division of **Emergency Medicine**.

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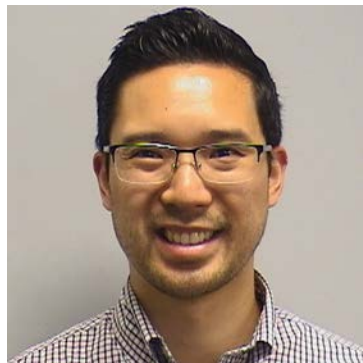
Renita Pushparajah Mak, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Emergency Medicine**.

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Jurhee Freese, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Endocrinology**.

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Daniel Mak, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Endocrinology**.

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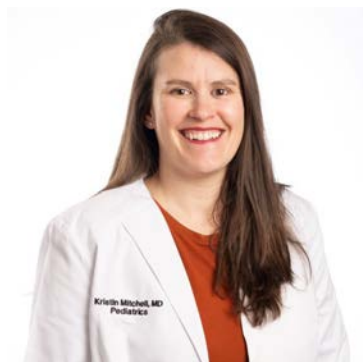
Phoebe Martin, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **General Pediatrics**.

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Aixa Gonzalez Garcia, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Genetics**.

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Kristen Mitchell, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Hospital Medicine**.

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Cindy Nguyen, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Hospital Medicine**.

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Zain Alamarat, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Infectious Diseases**.

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Patrick Jennings, M.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Breast Imaging**.

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Rachel Taylor, M.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Breast Imaging**.

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Memoona Mian, M.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Neuroradiology**.

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Shobhit Sharma, M.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Neuroradiology**.

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Joshua Eichhorn, M.D., Ph.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Nuclear Medicine and Body Imaging**.

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Recent Grants & Research



PROTECTING HEARTS WHILE TREATING CANCER | Hui-Ming Chang, M.D., M.P.H., is leading UAMS' first Phase 1 cancer clinical trial with the support of a five-year, \$3.5 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant. [READ MORE](#)



The National Institutes of Health has awarded a \$1.36 million grant to researchers at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) to develop a non-invasive means of detecting weaknesses in a pregnant woman's pelvic floor muscles that could lead to injury while giving birth. [READ MORE](#)



Two studies by researchers at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) have shed some light on Arkansans' preferred locations for COVID-19 testing and the reasons why some people may decide not to get a test in the first place. [READ MORE](#)



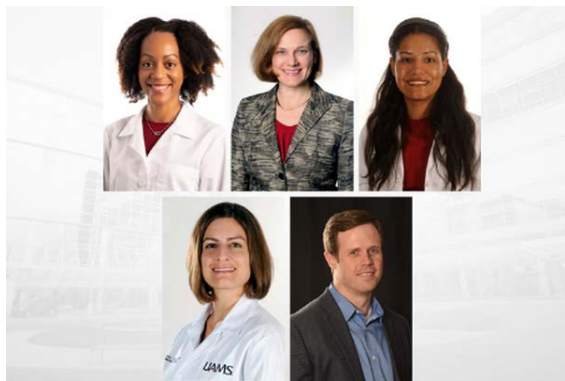
A NIH-funded collaboration between scientists at Arkansas Children's Research Institute and UAMS will help the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Arkansas Department of Health understand more about the variants of COVID-19 circulating in the state.

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A statewide COVID-19 antibody study led by UAMS found that by the end of 2020, 7.4% of Arkansans had antibodies to the virus, but there were wide disparities among racial and ethnic groups. Researchers released their findings this month to a public database, medRxiv (med archive).

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The UAMS Translational Research Institute (TRI) recently announced its 2021 Team Science Voucher Program recipients for 2021. [READ MORE](#)



The UAMS Translational Research Institute (TRI) recently announced three recipients of pilot research grants that will support projects benefiting rural populations. [READ MORE](#)



The UAMS Translational Research Institute (TRI) recently named two College of Medicine faculty members as Data Scholars for 2021.

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Extramural Awards

*Congratulations to College of Medicine faculty and staff who received new **extramural grants** in January-June 2021. This list, courtesy of the Office of the Executive Associate Dean for Research, excludes clinical trials and awards under \$10,000.*

Ashley Acheson, Ph.D., Department of **Psychiatry**, Family Health Patterns, NIH/National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism, (3/1/2021 – 2/28/2026), \$3,327,526.

Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Long-Term Survivors of Ovarian Cancer, US Department of Defense, (3/15/2021 – 12/25/2022), \$1,590,298.

Jon Blevins, Ph.D., Department of **Microbiology and Immunology**, Cyclic di-GMP Second Messenger Signaling, NIH/National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases, (3/25/2021 – 2/28/2023), \$423,883.

William Coggins, M.D., Department of **Neurosurgery**, NREF Technology in Neurosurgery Grant, American Association of Neurological Surgeons, (4/1/2021 – 12/31/2021), \$10,000.

Maria Schuller De Almeida, Ph.D., Department of **Internal Medicine**, Resubmission – Different Consequences, NIH, (4/1/2021 – 12/31/2025), \$1,917,850.

Gina Drobeno, M.D., Department of **Pathology**, Interprofessional Education (IPE) and Collaborative, Ardmore Institute of Health, (7/1/2021 – 6/30/2022), \$75,000.

Alysia Dubriske, M.Ed., Department of **Family and Preventive Medicine**, Delta Communities Connected through Placemaking, Winrock International, (2/28/2021 – 6/30/2022), \$50,000.

Hari Eswaran, Ph.D., **Institute for Digital Health and Innovation**, Telehealth Covid-19 Broadband Pilot Evaluation, Health Resources & Services Administration, (1/1/2021-12/31/2023), \$1,500,00.

Amy Ferrando, Ph.D., Department of **Geriatrics**, Meat & Poultry, Foundation for Meat & Poultry Research Education, (3/1/2021-3/1/2022), \$190,137.

Clint Kilts, Ph.D., Department of **Psychiatry**, Functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), Arkansas Research Alliance, (3/15/2021 – 3/14/2022), \$37,500.

Justin Wai Chung Leung, Ph.D., Department of Radiation Oncology Mechanistic characterization of the cell cycle-dep, NIH/National Cancer Institute, (3/1/2021 – 2/28/2026), \$1,015,770.

Nirmala Parajuli, Ph.D., Department of **Pharmacology and Toxicology**, Targeting heat shock protein 72 to improve renal, NIH/National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases, (3/15/2021 – 1/31/2026), \$2,461,707.

Roger Pechous, Ph.D., Department of **Microbiology and Immunology**, Defining the Role of the Plasminogen, NIH, (5/1/2021 – 4/30/2026), \$1,700,599.

Fred Prior, Ph.D., Department of **Biomedical Informatics**, TO 6 (N3C Imaging Pilot) 20X023F, NIH/National Cancer Institute, (1/27/2021 – 8/31/2021), \$180,000. Pass through from Leidos.

Fred Prior, Ph.D., Department of **Biomedical Informatics**, TO7 MIDI(2) 20X023F, NIH/National Cancer Institute, (6/1/2021 – 8/30/2021), \$65,840. Pass through from Leidos.

Sherrie Searcy, Ph.D., **Institute for Digital Health and Innovation**, Tele-SANE Training Program, Health Resources & Services Administration, (7/1/2021 – 6/30/2023), \$1,498,830.

David Ussery, Ph.D., Department of **Biomedical Informatics**, Genomic Epidemiology of SARS CoV-2 in Arkansas, Arkansas Research Alliance, (3/15/2021 – 3/14/2022), \$25,000.

Edward Yeh, M.D., Department of **Internal Medicine**, Doxorubicin-induced Cardiotoxicity, NIH/National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute, (3/22/2021 – 8/31/2021), \$79,055.

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Accolades



Have you read the latest *Accolades* from Dean Smyth? The weekly email highlights recent honors and accomplishments of COM faculty, staff, residents and students. You can also [read Accolades here](#). If you know someone who deserves a shout-out, send your ideas to [COM Internal Communications](#).

UAMS team members and students named in Accolades this month:

Aadil Ahmed
Jared Beavers
Erin Bider
Michael Birrer
Beatrice Boateng
Christy Brazil
Mary Catherine Brown
Stephanie Byrum
Patrick Casey
Lindsey Clark
Jessica Coker
Stacia Dean
Rohit Dhall
Nicola Edge
Rick Edmondson
Stephanie Gardner
Elizabeth Gath
Manos Giorgakis
Johnathan Goree
Anthony Goudie
Ebonye Green
Sarah Greenberger

Melissa Halverson
Courtney Hampton
Aubrey Hough
Carrie Hyde
Katherine Irby
Donald Johann
Tonya Johnson
Cindy Kane
Maryalice Kelly
Thomas Kelly
Jennifer Laudadio
Kanna Lewis
Samuel Mackintosh
Nirvana Manning
Berry Marks
Isis Martel
Dwana McKay
Steven McKee
Lorraine McKelvey
Diane McKinstry
Priya Mendiratta
Jill Mhyre

Jason Mizell
Austin Morgan
Peter Mourani
Richard Nicholas
Erika Petersen
Erin Puryear
Luann Racher
Suzie Robertson
Ronald Sanders
Danette Scherer
Thomas Schulz
LaTunja Sockwell
Aaron Storey
Alan Tackett
Sara Tariq
Lindsay Van Parys
Aravindhan
Veerapandiyan
Jasna Vuk
Kent Westbrook

COM departments represented in Accolades this month:

Anesthesiology
Biochemistry/Molecular Biology
Biomedical Informatics
Emergency Medicine
Family/Preventive Medicine
Geriatrics
Internal Medicine
Neurobiology/Developmental Sciences
Neurology
Neurosurgery

Obstetrics/Gynecology
Orthopaedic Surgery
Otolaryngology-Head/Neck Surgery
Pediatrics
Pathology
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation
Psychiatry
Radiology
Surgery

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The *COMmunication* is published monthly to highlight key events, initiatives and developments in the COM, introduce new faculty members and leaders, and shine a spotlight on our work in education, research, clinical care and service to Arkansas. To view past issues, visit the [COMmunication webpage](#). Comments, questions and suggestions for improvements are always welcome. Call Tamara Robinson, Senior Communications Writer, at 526-5163, or click the red button below to email the *COMmunication*.

Comments? Ideas? Email Us!

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