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January 2022

GO TO: In the Spotlight | Leadership Appointments | New Faculty | Recent Grants & Research | Accolades | In Memoriam



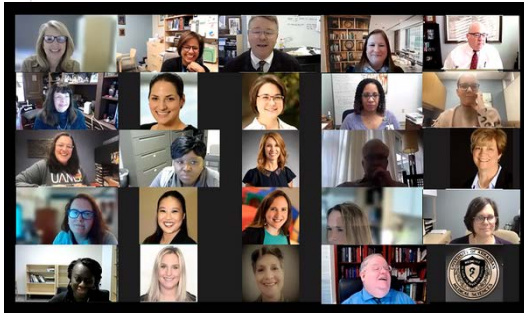
“COM Conversations” Provides New Discussion Forum for Team Members

Feeling a little “foggy”? Worried about lacking “bandwidth” to accomplish things that once seemed doable? Or maybe you are struggling with “decision fatigue.”

College of Medicine Dean **Susan Smyth, M.D., Ph.D.**, and other leaders launched “COM Conversations,” a new virtual journal club and discussion group open to everyone in the COM, with a Jan. 11 Zoom discussion on how the prolonged pandemic is impacting our stress levels, memory and more – and what we can do about it.

“I wanted to start this conversation by saying that if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, you are not alone,” Smyth told some 60 participants. “This really is affecting all of us in one way or another, and there are normal responses to facing trauma and to being under stress.”

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Join the Conversation!

COM Conversations is a journal club open to all faculty, staff, residents, fellows and students. Upcoming sessions will focus on workplace topics, leadership development and other issues. (More info soon!) Got an idea for a topic/article for discussion? Send it to Dr. Smyth via the online [Comments for the Dean](#) portal.

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In the Spotlight



NEWLY INVESTED | Congratulations to **Ozlem Tulunay-Ugur, M.D.**, Professor of **Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery**, on her Jan. 13 investiture in the Patricia and J. Floyd Kyser, M.D., Chair in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. Dr. Tulunay-Ugur directs UAMS' laryngology program and is nationally known for her expertise in geriatric laryngology, including voice and swallowing disorders. [READ MORE](#)



In her latest **Spotlight on Excellence** video, Dean **Susan Smyth, M.D., Ph.D.**, interviews cancer researcher **Brian Koss, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of **Biochemistry and Molecular Biology** and Arkansas' first recipient of the Director's Early Independence Award from the National Institutes of Health.

WATCH THE VIDEO

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Leadership Appointments

Chair, Department of Pediatrics



William Steinbach, M.D., began serving as Professor and Chair of the Department of **Pediatrics**, Associate Dean for Child Health in the College of Medicine and Pediatrician-in-Chief for Arkansas Children's in January. He previously was the Samuel L. Katz Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics, Professor and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, and Professor in the Department of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology at Duke University.

"Dr. Steinbach brings extensive leadership experience in pediatric care, research and education to Arkansas and will be a driving force in UAMS and Arkansas Children's initiatives to enhance the health and wellbeing of the children of our state," said Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean **Susan S. Smyth, M.D., Ph.D.** Dr. Steinbach's appointment was [announced last August](#).

Assistant Dean for Research



Paul Drew, Ph.D., Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of **Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences**, has been appointed assistant dean for research. Dr. Drew will partner with **Nancy Rusch, Ph.D.**, vice dean for research, to lead special initiatives in the College of Medicine Research Office.

“Dr. Drew is an internationally recognized neuroscientist, and he has the innovative skills and leadership experience necessary to establish and direct research initiatives across the

College of Medicine,” said Rusch. “He will be an outstanding mentor for new investigators and a strong asset to our scientists at all career levels.”

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New Faculty



Chaya Krishnan, M.D., has rejoined the Department of **Anesthesiology** as an Assistant Professor.

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Dinesh Edem, M.D., has joined the Department of **Internal Medicine** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Endocrinology**.

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Gena Miller, M.D., has joined the Department of **Internal Medicine** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Endocrinology**.

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Barbara Porchia, DPM, has joined the Department of **Orthopaedic Surgery** as an Assistant Professor.

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Salim Aljabari, M.D., has joined the Department of **Pediatrics** as an Assistant Professor in the **Critical Care Medicine** Section.

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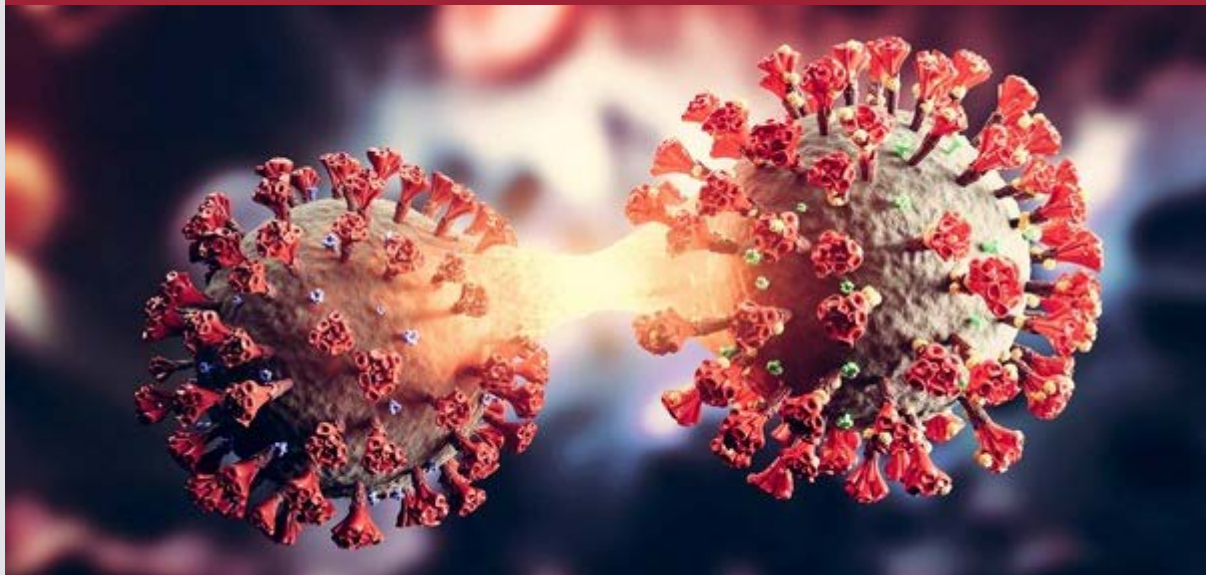


Bob Dixon, M.D., has joined the Department of **Radiology** as a Professor in the Division of **Interventional Radiology**.

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Recent Grants & Research



MUTATION LIMITS | Drawing from global databases with millions of sequenced SARS-CoV-2 genomes, a multinational team led by **David Ussery, Ph.D.,** Professor of **Biomedical Informatics**, has found that the coronavirus' ability to mutate does have limits that should help drug and vaccine manufacturers in the effort to thwart the virus. [READ MORE](#)

Extramural Awards

Congratulations to College of Medicine team members who received new extramural grants in December. This list, courtesy of the Office of the Executive Associate Dean for Research, excludes clinical trials and awards under \$10,000.

Justin Wai Chung Leung, Ph.D., Department of **Radiation Oncology**, Mechanistic characterization of the Hippo tumor, American Cancer Society Inc., (12/21/2021-12/31/2023), \$30,600.

Kirk West, Ph.D., Department of **Radiation Oncology**, American Cancer Society Postdoctoral Fellowship, Defining the role of LC8-TLK1/2 axis in the DNA, American Cancer Society Inc., (12/20/2021-12/31/2024), \$56,000. [READ MORE](#)



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The College of Medicine Research Office is accepting proposals for three intramural grant programs through Feb. 14. Funding for the **Barton Pilot Study Grants**, **Hornick Endowment Grants** and **Sturgis Foundation Grants** will begin in April. More information is available in [the announcement](#).

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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:

Lee Archer
Marzella Backus
Michael Bauer
Logan Bevill
Renee Bornemeier
Anna Brickell
Andrew Bryson
David Bumpass
Deepak Choudhary
Ashly Cummings
J.D. Day
Tisha Deen
Scott Dickson
Ebonye Green
Natalie Guley
Michael Hobensack
Erika Santos Horta
Lawrence "Tony" Hoyt

Piroon Jenjaroenpun
Stacie Jones
Mi Mi Kim
Brian Koss
Justin Leung
Erin Mannen
Sanjay Maraboyina
Spyridoula Maraka
Greg May
J.L. Mehta
Ron Mora
Intawat Nookaew
Sanjeeva Reddy Onteddu
Viktoras Palys
Melissa Peterman
Erika Petersen
Robbie Pesek
Analiz Rodriguez

Steve Schexnayder
Amy Scurlock
Yash Shah
John Sherrill
Rosalia C.M. Simmen
David Spiro
William Steinbach
Zhong Su
Sara Tariq
Morgan Sweere-Treece
Valentina Todorova
Ozlem Tulunay-Ugur
David Ussery
Visanu Wanchai
Kirk West
Thidathip Wongsurawat
Fen Xia
Feliciano "Pele" Yu Jr

COM departments represented in Accolades this month:

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

Orthopaedic Surgery
Otolaryngology-Head/Neck Surgery
Pathology
Pediatrics
Physiology/Cell Biology
Psychiatry
Radiation Oncology
Radiology

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In Memoriam



Kent McKelvey, M.D., with portraits of some of his patients. Dr. McKelvey and photographer Johnpaul Jones (now retired) collaborated on "Blue Roses" in 2011, capturing the beauty and joyfulness of Dr. McKelvey's patients as well as his compassion and love for them.

Kent McKelvey, M.D., Associate Professor in the Division of **Genetics** and the Department of **Family and Preventive Medicine**, died Jan. 17, 2022, after a five-year battle with acute myeloid leukemia. Dr. McKelvey served as Director of Cancer Genetics Services in the **Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute** and was the inaugural recipient of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Chair in Clinical Genetics. Dr. McKelvey was a champion for Arkansans with Down syndrome and other genetic conditions and was instrumental in establishing the Adult Genetics Clinic at UAMS. He was a nationally recognized leader on the ethical use of predictive genetic testing in clinical medicine and was on the forefront of teaching the responsible use of molecular genetics in preventive medicine. [READ MORE](#)



Joshua D. Johnson, M.D., a second-year **Family Medicine** resident at the **UAMS Northwest Regional Campus**, died Dec. 28, 2021, following an illness. He was remembered by colleagues as a selfless and caring individual who worked tirelessly on the front lines of clinical care during the pandemic. Dr. Johnson studied molecular biosciences at the University of Kansas and Finance and Economics at the University of Missouri Kansas City before earning his medical degree from Ross university. [READ MORE](#)

Joshua Johnson, M.D.

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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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