



Dear Colleagues,

I hope 2025 is off to a great start for you and that the year brings many professional and personal successes. With your help, I know we will make meaningful progress across our programs in education, research, clinical care and service to the state. I look forward to working with you to further move the needle in improving health in Arkansas.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of an important partner for UAMS, the Arkansas Medical Society. One of the highlights for me this month was the kickoff commemoration at the State Capitol. Many faculty, students and alumni joined the Jan. 16 celebration, as you can see from the photos above and below. The speakers included two legislators who are UAMS alumni, Rep. **Lee Johnson, M.D. '96**, and Rep. **Steve Magie, M.D., '80**. It truly was an honor to help the AMS celebrate its remarkable service to Arkansas.

Another highlight this month was the arrival of **Ashley Norse, M.D.**, the new Chair of the Department of **Emergency Medicine** and Clinical Service Chief for Emergency Medicine for UAMS Medical Center. We are very excited about her joining UAMS from Jacksonville, Florida, and you can learn more about Dr. Norse below. Congratulations also to **Eric Peterson, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of **Pharmacology & Toxicology**, on his appointment as President of **BioVentures LLC**.

Finally, be sure to mark your calendar for our annual **Dean's Honor Day Ceremony** on **Tuesday, April 29, 4:00 p.m.**, in Fred Smith Auditorium. We will present awards for exemplary faculty and staff, pay tribute to faculty who are receiving promotion and/or tenure this year, and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of *all* team members. **Nominations for all awards are being accepted through Monday, Feb. 24.** I encourage COM leaders and faculty to nominate exceptional colleagues and staff. Please visit the [COM Faculty Awards website](#) for more information.

Steven A. Webber, MBChB, MRCP
Dean, College of Medicine
Executive Vice Chancellor, UAMS

Pictured at top of page with Dr. Webber (center) and Becky Latch, M.D., Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (far right) are medical students (from left) Lizzie Stevens (M2), Jordan Myers (M4), John Striednig (M1), John Pablo-Kaiser (M3), Morgan Whited (M2), McKenzie Hendrix (M2), Kennedy Johnson (M1), Duru Erkan (M2), and Jack Parker (M1). Pictured below are some of the faculty members and AMS representatives who attended the celebration. Kudos to all who participated!



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LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Emergency Medicine | Welcome, Dr. Norse!

Ashley Booth Norse, M.D., began serving as Professor and Chair of the Department of **Emergency Medicine** this month. She is also Clinical Service Chief for Emergency Medicine for UAMS Medical Center. Dr. Norse was recruited to UAMS from the University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville, where her leadership roles included Associate Chair of Operations in the Department of Emergency Medicine.

"Dr. Norse is known nationally and in Florida as an ardent emergency medicine physician, leader and patient advocate who has strived to improve standards and performance in her field and medicine more broadly," said **Steven Webber, MBChB**, College of Medicine Dean and UAMS Executive Vice Chancellor. "She will be an outstanding leader for our excellent programs, faculty and staff in Emergency Medicine." [READ MORE](#)



UAMS BioVentures



Eric Peterson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of **Pharmacology and Toxicology**, has been named President of BioVentures LLC, after serving as Interim President of the UAMS-based technology licensing office since March 2024 and previously as Executive Vice President.

"Dr. Peterson has been a capable leader who applied his specific expertise in technology development to promote additional success for BioVentures," said **Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D.**, UAMS Provost, Chief Strategy Officer and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. [READ MORE](#)

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NEW FACULTY

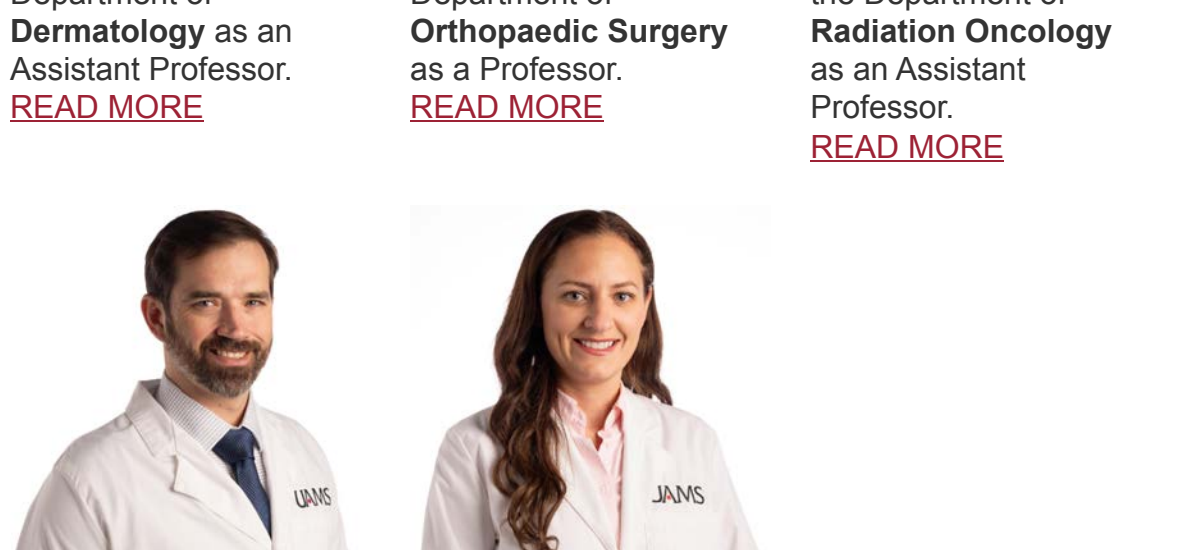
Please join us in welcoming these recent additions to the COM faculty!



Patrick Phelan, M.D., MPH, has joined the Department of **Dermatology** as an Assistant Professor. [READ MORE](#)

Simon Mears, M.D., Ph.D., has joined the Department of **Orthopaedic Surgery** as a Professor. [READ MORE](#)

J. Scott Cordova, M.D., Ph.D., has joined the Department of **Radiation Oncology** as an Assistant Professor. [READ MORE](#)



Mark Hardin, M.D., has joined the Department of **Surgery** as an Assistant Professor in the Division of **Cardiovascular Surgery**. [READ MORE](#)

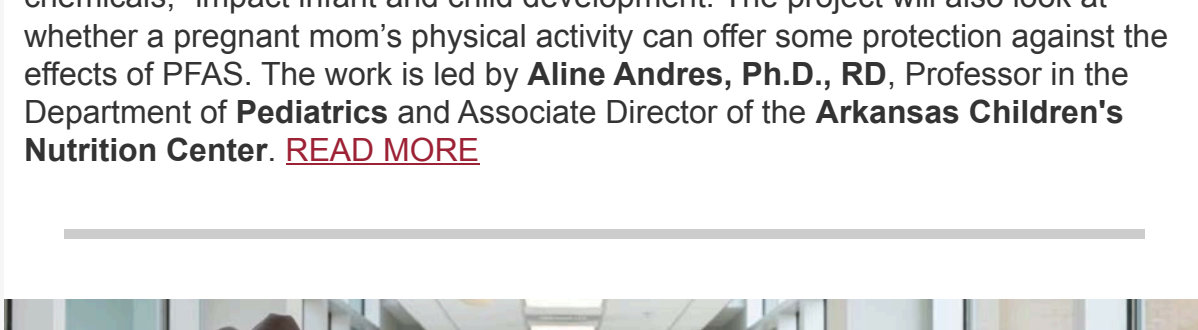
Michaela (Mikki) Kollisch, M.D., has joined the Department of **Surgery** as an Associate Professor in the Division of **Pediatric Surgery**. [READ MORE](#)

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RECENT GRANTS



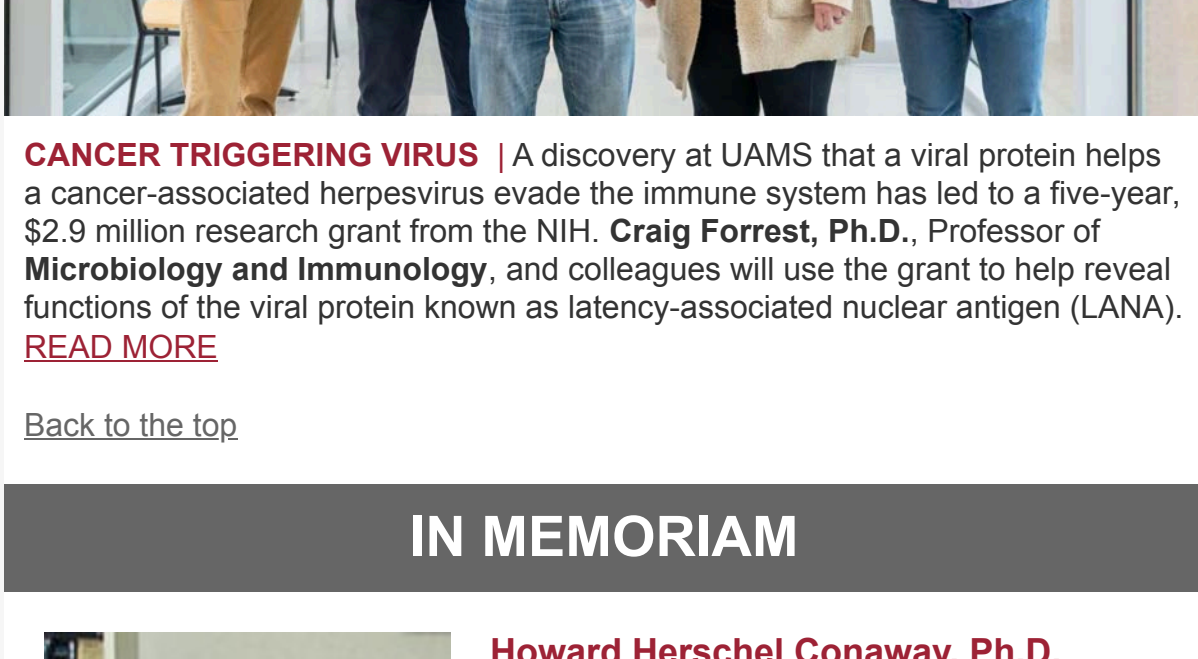
FOREVER CHEMICALS & DEVELOPMENT | The National Institutes of Health has awarded **Arkansas Children's Research Institute** a \$3 million grant to explore how polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as "forever chemicals," impact infant and child development. The project will also look at whether a pregnant mom's physical activity can offer some protection against the effects of PFAS. The work is led by **Aline Andres, Ph.D., RD**, Professor in the Department of **Pediatrics** and Associate Director of the **Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center**. [READ MORE](#)



CANCER TRIGGERING VIRUS | A discovery at UAMS that a viral protein helps a cancer-associated herpesvirus evade the immune system has led to a five-year, **\$2.9 million** research grant from the NIH. **Craig Forrest, Ph.D.**, Professor of **Microbiology and Immunology**, and colleagues will use the grant to help reveal functions of the viral protein known as latency-associated nuclear antigen (LANA). [READ MORE](#)

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IN MEMORIAM



Howard Herschel Conaway, Ph.D.

Howard Herschel Conaway, Ph.D., a faculty member for more than 50 years in what is now the Department of **Physiology and Cell Biology**, died Dec. 28. An award-winning educator, Dr. Conaway taught in the M1 Medical Physiology course for 42 years and went on to serve as Course Director of the M2 Endocrine/Reproduction Module from 2013 until his retirement in 2021. He published extensively throughout his career, with a research focus on defining physiological agents that stimulate osteoclasts and bone resorption. [READ MORE](#)

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 and questions are always welcome. Call Tamara Robinson, Senior Communications Writer, at 526-5163, or send an email to COMInternalCommunications@uams.edu.