



# PULASKI COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY News

January 2021

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When you think professional, ethical, quality healthcare,  
think physicians of Pulaski County Medical Society.

## President's Address

Dear Members,

It is an honor to be serving as President of the Pulaski County Medical Society (PCMS). I look forward to serving you, Pulaski County, and the largest county medical society in the state. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you for your support. We look forward to making our community a priority.

The society strives to be actively involved in local issues.

- This past year we supported Safe Surgery Arkansas. Scope of practice issues will continue to be on the forefront of debate. This issue isn't just about protecting our specialties, but also about protecting our patients. In my opinion, patient safety gets overlooked.
- We are striving to increase involvement in local clinics to help the underserved. A donation to Harmony Health Clinic was made this past year. We are also looking for physicians to volunteer their time or services to help support these local compassion clinics.
- PCMS supported the Stay at Home executive order, made a financial contribution to the Little Rock COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund, and produced a PSA concerning COVID-19. <https://youtu.be/WXs7mzErdAo>

PCMS continues to work toward keeping our physicians healthy. The PCMS Healing the Healer Foundation was established to offer free support and confidential counseling to enhance the mental well-being of physicians and students. With increasing stressors in medical practices this service is essential for support. The society was also involved in an event on National Suicide Prevention Day and a Zoom panel meeting discussing physician burnout.



Brian Wayne, M.D.

*Continued on page 4w*



# Foresight in 2020.

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## 2020 In Review

The year 2020 was dominated by the world wide COVID-19 pandemic. As of the writing of this article the world wide death toll is 1.82 million, 341,199 deaths in the United States, and 3,676 in Arkansas. Our member physicians have stood firm on the front lines of this pandemic and it has dominated their lives these past 12 months. There were events that changed how our society views itself, and those events that just made us stop and think. Events have occurred in 2020 that you may have forgotten about, or it was just overshadowed by COVID-19, that I want to remind you of in the review of the year 2020.

Australian wildfires captured headlines during the first three months of 2020 and eventually scorched 46 million acres, destroying more than 5,900 buildings, and the smoke reached into South America.

The sudden and tragic death of Kobe and Gianna Bryant, along with seven others, on their way to a youth basketball camp reminded all of us how fragile and precious life is. We would be reminded of this again and again throughout the year.

For only the third time in our country's history a sitting President was impeached; Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1998, and Donald Trump in 2020.

One of the Me Too Movements greatest victories may have been the conviction of disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein. Mr. Weinstein was convicted of rape and sexual assault and sentenced to 23 years in prison after numerous women came forward accusing him of these crimes. The Me Too Movement cast a light on sexual violence in the country that has changed the landscape forever.

The names of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor are now synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement which swept the country during 2020. Each of these unarmed United States citizens was killed by

police officers. Ahmaud Arbery was shot while jogging in Georgia; George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer who knelt on his neck for over eight minutes while being video recorded; and Breonna Taylor was shot by Louisville police during a no-knock warrant entry into her

boyfriend's apartment. These and other incidents have caused much debate and driven legislators in many states to rethink policing in their communities.

Senator Kamala Harris was nominated as the second female Vice Presidential candidate, and the first female elected to that post, in US history.

After a difficult election season Senator Joe Biden became President Elect Biden and will be sworn in as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, also known as "The Notorious RBG", died in 2020. She served on the Supreme Court since 1993. She was, and still is, a role model of what young

girls can become. She left behind a legacy of fighting for gender equality; battling sexism personally and in the courts; and was the first justice to officiate a same sex marriage.

2020 was a year that we will never forget. The Washington Post summed the year 2020 in this way.

*"A global pandemic. A racial reckoning. A presidential impeachment. A monumental election. We all know 2020 was a year like no other. But is it possible to sum it up in one word or phrase? The Washington Post asked readers to do just that and offer their reasoning, hoping that all together we might discover some collective wisdom. Over 2,000 responded. The top three words were Exhausting, Lost, and Chaotic"*

I wish our entire physician membership, their families and staff all happiness and good health in 2021.

Derek Rudkin, CAE  
Executive Director





## Baptist Health Center for Clinical Research Among First Sites in U.S. to Study Novel COVID Prevention Agent

Baptist Health Center for Clinical Research has been selected as one of the first two sites in the U.S. to study a novel COVID prevention agent, using two monoclonal antibodies instead of a vaccine. This new study could begin in the next few days.

Baptist Health Center for Clinical Research's study coincides with a broader nationwide effort, Operation Warp Speed, which was announced in May as a public-private partnership to facilitate, at an unprecedented pace, the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 measures including vaccines, diagnostics and treatments.

"We are preparing to start the COVID-19 prevention trial in a matter of days," says Richard G. Pellegrino MD, PhD, CEO and President of Baptist Health Center for Clinical Research. "Participants must be over 18 and there is no upper limit to participate. This is not a vaccine. Instead the antibodies bind to the COVID-19 spike protein and prevent COVID from replicating and thereby prevent disease. Of the participants, 67 percent will get the antibody in the form of a shot and 33 percent of participants will receive the placebo."



AstraZeneca's long-acting antibody combination will advance into Phase III clinical trials with approximately 5,000 participants in and outside the U.S. These antibodies have been engineered so that they last longer in the body, as long as six to 12 months following a single administration.

The trial will evaluate the safety and efficacy of these antibodies to prevent infection for up to 12 months.

Long-acting antibodies mimic natural antibodies and have the potential to be given as preventative intervention prior to exposure to the virus. These antibodies are a

combination of two long-acting antibodies derived from convalescent patients after COVID-19 infection.

If you are interested and would like more information, please visit [arkansascovidvaccine.com](https://arkansascovidvaccine.com) and fill out the contact form. Filling out the form does not commit you to the study, but you will be contacted to provide more information and to answer additional questions.

Study-related care is available to participants at no cost and health insurance is not required nor needed. Participants will be compensated for time and travel if they qualify and enroll in the study.

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## President's Address

*Continued from page 1*

The society also continues to support UAMS medical students through the PCMS Carolyn Clayton Freshmen Scholarship fund, freshmen orientation luncheon, and student project support. One particular project we continue to support, and continues to grow, is the UAMS LULAC Medical Spanish Course.

PCMS has a new website and Membership Directory! We hope this helps continue to keep us all in touch and informed. If you would like to stay better connected and

informed, please visit the website and ensure we have all your contact information. The society also is engaged with UAMS students to improve our presence on social media and look forward working on this in the coming year. We should have a unified voice as PCMS and welcome active involvement from our members.

Thank you for your support,  
Brian Wayne, M.D.

# UAMS Begins Recruiting Participants for Phase 3 COVID-19 Investigational Vaccine Clinical Trial

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) is now a testing site for the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson's Phase 3 clinical research study, ENSEMBLE, to evaluate the safety and efficacy of Janssen's investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate, JNJ-78436735, also known as Ad26.COV2.S.

The Phase 3 randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial is designed to evaluate the safety and efficacy of a single vaccine dose of the Janssen investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate versus placebo, in approximately 60,000 adults 18 years old and older, including significant representation from those over 60.

The trial will include those both with and without other illnesses associated with an increased risk for progression to severe COVID-19. More information about the trial is available at: [www.ensemblestudy.com](http://www.ensemblestudy.com).

To enroll in UAMS' trial of Janssen's investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate, call (501) 231-4852. Participants will be seen at Freeway Medical Tower at 5800 W. 10th St., in Little Rock.

Kristine Patterson, M.D., is leading the clinical trial for UAMS with study coordination provided by the UAMS Translational Research Institute.

"We're very excited to have a role in such a critical trial with a potential global impact," said Patterson, an infectious disease specialist and associate professor in the College of Medicine Department of Internal Medicine. "Arkansans now have an opportunity to help us be part of this historic effort."

Patterson said the study especially needs volunteers who are most likely to come into contact with the virus, including health care workers, first responders, school personnel and correctional workers.

Participants will receive stipends up to \$1,430 over the two-year period, depending on the type and number of visits completed.

To support the recruitment process, Janssen has developed the [ENSEMBLE Study](http://www.ensemblestudy.com/#/1/) ([www.ensemblestudy.com/#/1/](http://www.ensemblestudy.com/#/1/))

website where people interested in volunteering for the study can register. All participant registration information will be collected, handled and stored according to local laws and regulations.

Following registration, the research centers will evaluate volunteers' information and then potentially request physical exams before the volunteer is included in the study. The ENSEMBLE website also provides details on the trial, such as medical monitoring and a question-and-answer section.

Janssen has joined other pharmaceutical companies in making a pledge to the world that it will continue to adhere to its high scientific, ethical and regulatory standards and will rely on robust clinical evidence to guide the development of its investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate. Janssen is committed to transparency and sharing information related to the Phase 3 ENSEMBLE study – including [the study protocol](http://www.jnj.com/coronavirus/covid-19-phase-3-study-clinical-protocol) ([www.jnj.com/coronavirus/covid-19-phase-3-study-clinical-protocol](http://www.jnj.com/coronavirus/covid-19-phase-3-study-clinical-protocol)).

Janssen's investigational COVID-19 vaccine leverages Janssen's [AdVac® technology](http://www.janssen.com/infectious-diseases-and-vaccines/vaccine-technology) ([www.janssen.com/infectious-diseases-and-vaccines/vaccine-technology](http://www.janssen.com/infectious-diseases-and-vaccines/vaccine-technology)). The same technology was used to develop Janssen's European Commission-approved Ebola vaccine regimen and is the basis for its HIV, RSV and Zika vaccine candidates. To date, more than 100,000 people have been vaccinated with a Janssen AdVac®-based vaccine.

ENSEMBLE is being initiated in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

This project has been funded in whole or in part with federal funds from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, under Other Transaction Agreement HHSO100201700018C.

## UAMS Using Artificial Intelligence to Study Heart Motion, Improve Treatments

UAMS cardiologist and researcher Subhi J. Al'Aref, M.D., is developing methods that use artificial intelligence to analyze heart motion in 4-D (3-D plus time dimension), which could save doctors time and give them better information for more effective treatments of certain heart patients.

A National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant of \$757,749 will support Al'Aref's research over the next five years.

The study is focused on patients whose heart chambers pump out of sync. The condition, known as cardiac dyssynchrony or ventricular dysfunction, often leads to heart failure. It is caused by irregular electronic signals, which limit the ability of the heart chambers to fill with blood as they should.

The standard treatment is cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT), which involves implanting either a pacemaker or defibrillator, whose electric signals make the heart contract properly.

Before recommending CRT, doctors must analyze the heart's function, which is no easy task, said Al'Aref, an assistant professor and director of Research in the UAMS College of Medicine Division of Cardiology.

"Developing a complete understanding of a patient's heart function is a challenge due to its complex 3-D structure and motion," he said. "Machine learning of the heart's motion patterns could help provide more accurate diagnosis and improve patient outcomes."

Machine learning involves the development of computer programs that can access data and use it to learn with limited human involvement. It uses artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically improve from experience.

"We've seen exciting new advances in machine learning that could be used to speed up the processing of cardiac images and to analyze the underlying regional motion patterns," Al'Aref said.

The study is recruiting 200 heart patients who are eligible for CRT.



## Donors Making a Difference

The following are members and clinics who have donated in support of the PCMS Healing the Healer Foundation during the 2021 Annual Dues drive. Your support will insure that our doctors are taken care of so that they can care for their patients:

### Doctors

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## UAMS Physician Establishes Second International Guidelines for Treating Castleman Disease

Frits van Rhee, M.D., Ph.D., a myeloma researcher and clinician at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), was lead author on a recently published paper that establishes consensus diagnosis and treatment guidelines for a form of Castleman disease, a rare disorder of the lymph nodes and related tissues.

The recommendations were created to improve outcomes in patients with a form of the disease called unicentric Castleman disease (UCD) that affects a single lymph node area and can compress vital structures such as blood vessels, nerve bundles or the airways. In others, UCD can give rise to night sweats, fevers, weight loss and anemia.

"Castleman disease is rare so people don't know how to treat it and until recently there has not been any systematic approach to UCD," said van Rhee, an international expert on Castleman disease. "These guidelines are meant to give treating physicians a framework for the diagnosis and treatment of UCD."

Van Rhee is a professor of medicine, clinical director of the UAMS Myeloma Center and holds the Charles and Clydene Scharlau Chair for Hematologic Malignancies Research.

The paper, "International Evidence-based Consensus Diagnostic and Treatment Guidelines for Unicentric Castleman Disease" was recently published in *Blood Advances*, an online publication of the American Society of Hematology. It included research and input from van Rhee and 41 other specialists, researchers, and clinicians from 10 countries.

The expert panel convened in a number of meetings organized by the Castleman Disease Collaborative Network, which van Rhee cofounded in 2012 with his patient David Fajgenbaum, M.D. The panel based the guidelines on published literature, a review of treatment in published cases of UCD, and data from an international registry from the network for patients with Castleman disease.

In 2018, van Rhee was the lead author on a paper published in *Blood*, the journal of American Society of Hematology. "International, Evidence-based Consensus Treatment Guidelines for Idiopathic Multicentric Castleman Disease" focused on treating patients who had idiopathic multicentric Castleman disease (iMCD), affecting multiple lymph node areas.

The focus of this new paper is to establish similar guidelines for the management of UCD.

"Unicentric Castleman disease is more common than the multicentric form and the majority of people with UCD can be treated with surgical removal," van Rhee said. "The problem is with the ones who can't be treated with surgery."

"If it cannot be removed surgically and you have symptoms because the mass is pressing on something vital, treatment can be much more difficult. A classic example is a mass in the chest that is near one of the major airways like the windpipe or the two main branches of the windpipe. Sometimes the only way to remove the mass is to remove one of the lungs and obviously you want to try to avoid that."

In those cases, the guidelines recommend partial surgical removal or treatment with other agents, including corticosteroids, antibodies or radiation.

"Radiation can have long-term side effects and can cause delayed problems so the patient's age needs to be taken into consideration," van Rhee said. "You want to try to avoid radiation for a benign disorder in a young patient. In selected patients a 'watch and wait' approach is justified. Still other treatment options include sealing off the vessels feeding the lymph node mass by embolization."

Castleman disease occurs when an abnormal overgrowth of cells occurs in the lymph system, which serves as the main part of the body's immune system. The disease, which affects 5,000 to 6,000 patients across the nation, was identified by Benjamin Castleman, M.D., in 1954.



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### **Mission:**

**Promote medical care,  
professional growth, and  
public health.**

### **Vision:**

**To be a catalyst for change  
in how healthcare is  
viewed and implemented  
in Central Arkansas**

## **Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021**

**1**

### **Practice and Professional Viability**

Maintain and enhance services,  
professional staff and communications  
to effectively implement the mission.

**2**

### **Community Voice and Outreach**

Create and participate in events to  
promote health; monitor and propose  
government initiatives that affect public  
health and safety; become the trusted  
resource in the community for overseeing  
the influencing of public health policy.

**3**

### **Leadership**

Growing the number of active members  
involved in the society's community  
outreach and service, and take care of  
the mental health of its members through  
the foundation.

**If you would like to be involved in the  
committee to help implement the  
Strategic Plan please call 501-687-0039.**