



PULASKI COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY *News*

December 2024

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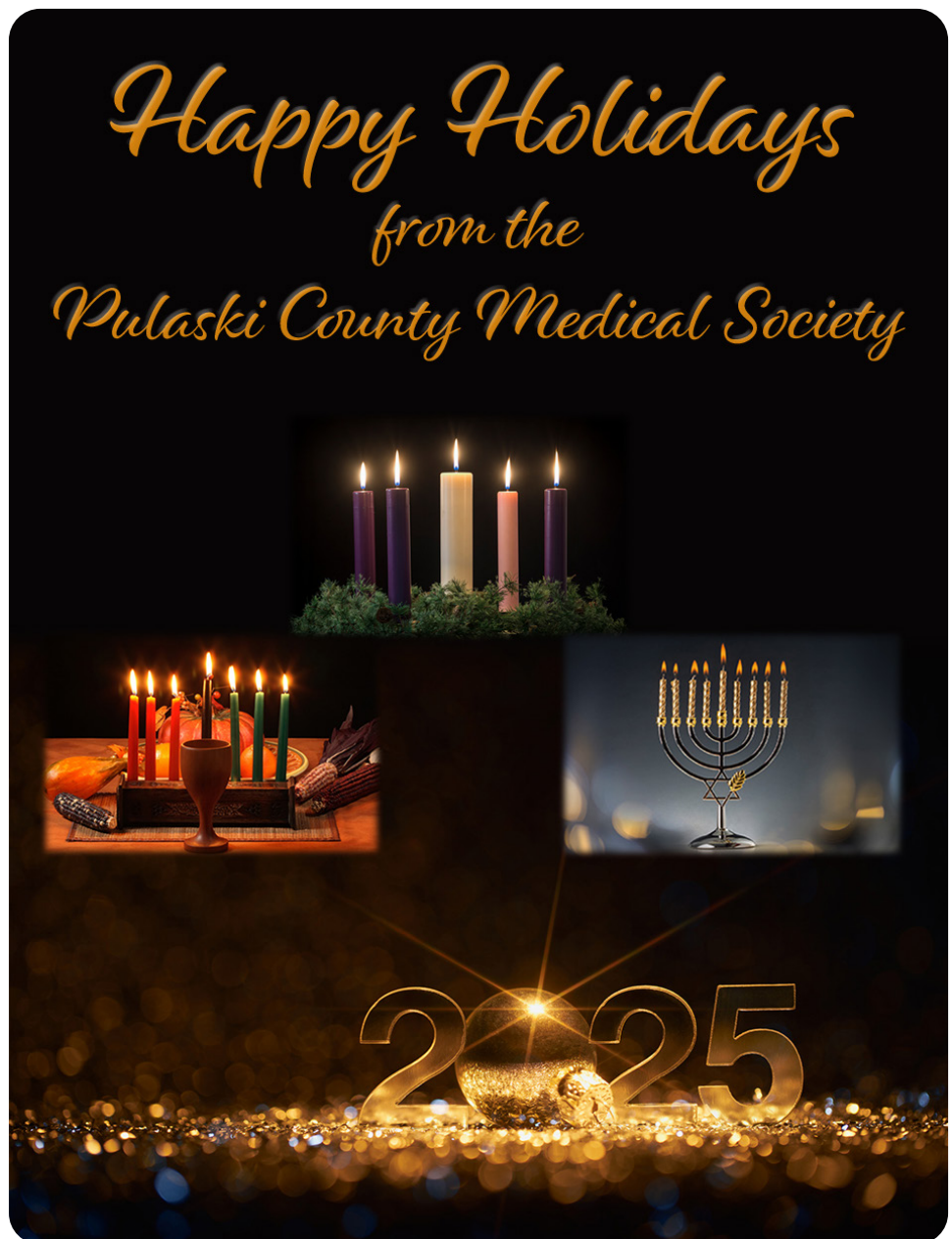
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When you think professional, ethical, quality healthcare,
think physicians of Pulaski County Medical Society.



Closed Claim Analysis: Stay in Your Lane ... and Follow the Rules of the Road

TIM BEHAN, JD, SENIOR CLAIMS ATTORNEY, SVMIC; REPRINTED FROM THE SVMIC SENTINEL

On a recent road trip to south Florida to move my daughter across the state, I took note of all the bad driving going on around me. It's not that I haven't seen a lot of bad driving in the past, and I am certain that other drivers could criticize my driving skills and behaviors from time to time. For some reason, perhaps due to the start of the summer vacation season, the inability of drivers to consistently stay in their lanes and follow the rules of the road was leading to extreme chaos. We literally came to complete stops on the interstate, in the left-hand lane, due to drivers veering in and out of the traffic. I thought to myself, this reminds me of cases and calls I have handled over the years at SVMIC. And with that, a Sentinel article was born.

When I think about staying in my lane and following the rules, the word 'boundaries' enters my mind. I've written in a previous article about the rising inability of patients to respect providers' boundaries and follow their rules of the medical practice road. There seems to be a decrease in the number of calls I am receiving from our policyholders regarding negative patient behavior. But unfortunately, we know there are still challenging patients and situations. Nonetheless, there are numerous roads in the medical-legal world, not just the ones we travel on with patients. The rules of those roads are sometimes easy to follow; and sometimes not. But they all have potential dangers that can lead to trouble when the traveler fails to stay within the lanes and follow the rules.

Perhaps the most heavily traveled road that I see daily is that of medical record requests. It is the superhighway of the medical-legal world. The attempts to get medical records come in many ways and are potential traps for the unaware. I am not speaking of the valid HIPAA signed authorizations by patients. I am speaking of attempts by others to get records, particularly subpoenas, from lawyers. This is especially true of family law lawyers in divorce or custody dispute cases involving confidential mental health records of the children that might need protecting. I also see subpoenas sent from other states saying that the recipient must comply with the rules of their jurisdiction. There is a legal pathway lawyers are to use when sending out of state subpoenas, but it is easier and cheaper to forego that process. Admittedly most of the time subpoenas are valid, however if you receive a confusing subpoena, it is always best to contact the claims department so that one of the attorneys may assist you. Some less frequent avenues used to obtain records are requests from out of state record collection companies, investigators of some kind, and family members claiming to have power of attorney rights to records. Again, when in doubt, contact us for help so that you don't unwittingly commit "traffic" violations of some sort.

I have seen instances in the past where providers chose not to stay in their lane and follow the rules of the road and suffered the consequences. A while ago, one of our surgeons and his physician assistant were sued for alleged post-op wound care issues. One of the plaintiff's claims was that the surgeon delegated his duties to the PA, even those that the PA was not qualified to handle. Essentially, according to the plaintiff's lawyer, the PA provided care that should have been provided by the surgeon, to the patient's detriment. Their defense lawyer gave the surgeon and PA instructions on what road to follow during the trial to best present their case. At trial, the defense lawyer deftly produced testimony from the two that they were staying in their lanes and performing within their roles and duties. But between breaks the jury saw the PA fetching items for the surgeon, getting glasses of water for the doctor when the doctor could have easily done so, and performing other tasks at the surgeon's request. They veered off the pathway with their actions. What was seen made a greater impact than what was said to the jury, and they rendered a verdict for the plaintiff.

Another instance that I recall where the provider failed to stay in a lane and follow the prescribed "rules of the road" occurred a few years ago with a nursing home director who also provided care to the residents. The nursing home was being sued in a medical malpractice case. The physician was not a defendant in that case. But an investigator with the State reached out to the doctor about the conditions of the nursing home. These conditions were part of the lawsuit. The doctor reached out to us, and I advised not to speak with anyone until I could get a plan in place to protect the physician's interests. But this doctor was very mad at the administrators of the facility and disregarded my advice. The physician spoke with the investigator thinking it was an off-the-record conversation. It, of course, was not. The defense lawyer for the nursing home got a record of the conversation and brought the doctor into the lawsuit. The physician's "road rage" if you will lead to a poor decision that resulted in a settlement payment and databank report.

There are many more examples that could be given. Suffice it to say, just like driving on the interstates of south Florida, the various avenues we encounter in the medical-legal field are equally fraught with peril. We must always navigate carefully, stay in our lanes, and follow the prescribed rules of whatever road we are traveling. It lessens the chaos and keeps complicated matters simple. And as always, if help is needed navigating your medical-legal roads, we are a phone call away to help guide and assist you on your journey.

For more information about SVMIC, contact our Arkansas representative, Sharon Theriot.

CARTI's Festival of Trees Breaks Fundraising Record for Second Consecutive Year

Raises Nearly \$870,000 for the Patient Assistance Program, Clinical Research

The CARTI Auxiliary's Festival of Trees has surpassed records for the second consecutive year, raising nearly \$870,000 to support Arkansas cancer patients and their families. More than \$100,000 will go toward expanding CARTI's clinical research program statewide, increasing residents' access to groundbreaking therapies and treatments.

"At CARTI, we believe the hope of 'brighter tomorrows' begins with ensuring all Arkansans have access to trusted cancer care, including lifesaving clinical trials," said Jennifer Selig, executive director of the CARTI Foundation. "The community's continued support for events like Festival of Trees is pivotal to reducing barriers, enhancing patient outcomes and improving quality of life for those in our state facing cancer."



Thanks to an anonymous match, more than \$100,000 of this year's Festival of Trees proceeds will benefit CARTI's clinical research program. The funding will allow the not-for-profit provider to place research coordinators at CARTI Cancer Centers statewide, enabling patients to access advanced therapies close to home. CARTI is currently the top enroller in the U.S. for multiple clinical trials.

Recognized as one of central Arkansas's most popular holiday events, Festival of Trees includes three nights: the Sugar Plum Ball, a father-daughter dance, Festival of Fashion, a New York Fashion Week-style runway show and Tux 'n Trees, a black-tie gala. Since its inception, Festival of Trees has raised more than \$11 million.



Baptist Health First In Arkansas To Utilize Cutting-Edge icometrix AI Technology for Neuroradiology

Baptist Health is the first health care organization in Arkansas to utilize icometrix's cutting-edge AI technology to improve neuroradiology services.

Through this collaboration, icobrain, icometrix's advanced AI software, will be introduced at all Baptist Health imaging locations across Arkansas, starting in North Little Rock.

The icobrain software uses state-of-the-art artificial intelligence to analyze brain MRI scans with exceptional precision. This helps radiologists and neurologists detect and monitor neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, dementia and traumatic brain injury more quickly and accurately.

icobrain uses artificial intelligence to assess brain volumes, abnormalities and subtle brain volume changes over time. icobrain aligns your brain scan with a reference atlas, and segments multiple brain structures to measure volumes, abnormalities, and subtle changes over time. Tailored to your condition, brain volumes are measured

and normalized for age, sex and head size before comparing it to a normal reference database.

The technology offers more personalized treatment plans and quicker diagnoses, allowing for earlier interventions when they matter most.

"By adopting icobrain, Baptist Health is committed to ensuring patients receive the highest level of quality, compassionate care," said Jessica Rivera, FACHE, vice president of operations at Baptist Health Medical Center-North Little Rock. "The healing ministry remains committed to embracing innovation in health care while maintaining the trust and comfort of our patients."

icometrix is internationally active and integrated with more than 300 hospitals and imaging networks worldwide. Alongside their clinical services, icometrix collaborates with some of the largest health care providers and pharmaceutical companies on the evaluation of new treatments for neurological diseases.

Baptist Health Heart Institute/Arkansas Cardiology Clinic-Little Rock Welcomes Cardiologist Dr. Kirby N. Von Edwins

Kirby N. Von Edwins, MD, recently joined the team at Baptist Health Heart Institute/Arkansas Cardiology Clinic-Little Rock.

Dr. Von Edwins received his medical education from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where he also completed residency training in internal medicine and a cardiovascular disease fellowship as a chief fellow.

"I have a priority for personalized and evidence-based care," Dr. Von Edwins said. "Cardiology is a unique mixture of prevention and management of cardiac diseases, and I enjoy meeting and helping patients wherever they are on that spectrum."

Dr. Von Edwins has a testamur in Nuclear Cardiology and Adult Echocardiography and is board eligible in Cardiovascular Disease. He is board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in Internal Medicine.



Dr. Kirby N. Von Edwins

For more than 30 years, Arkansas Cardiology has provided our patients with the most advanced cardiovascular services in the state. Our board-certified cardiologists not only specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease but also pioneered the concept of subspecialization within cardiology here in Arkansas.

Arkansas Attorney General Provides \$600,000 Grant to Support Women's Mental Health Fellowship

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences has received a \$600,000 grant from Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin to support a women's mental health fellowship in an effort to address the impact of the opioid epidemic on women and to help reduce the state's maternal mortality rate.

The grant will be used to train a new generation of psychiatrists in the treatment of women with opioid use disorder and other psychiatric conditions, specifically during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

The Women's Mental Health Program, based in the UAMS Psychiatric Research Institute, has the state's only three psychiatrists specializing in women's mental health. The program recorded 3,758 patient visits between January 2023 and August 2024, 40% of which were for substance use disorders.

Mental health conditions, including drug overdoses and suicide, are among the leading underlying causes of pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. Arkansas ranks third in the nation in maternal deaths, behind Mississippi and Alabama, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics compiled from 2018 to 2022.

The increasing need for specialists in women's mental health makes this fellowship, one of fewer than 20 in the country, so vital, according to Jessica Coker, M.D., the medical director of the Psychiatric Research Unit's inpatient units.

"Women have been uniquely affected by the opioid crisis and in general are more prone to psychiatric illnesses including depression and anxiety. Hormonal changes during pregnancy and the postpartum period also increase rates of psychiatric illness," said Coker. "Having specialized psychiatrists that understand the hormonal nuances and can balance the risks and benefits of treatment is crucial for women during this vulnerable time. We are excited to be able to train more psychiatrists in this area who will be able to serve patients across the state and beyond."

Fellows in the program will train in UAMS' outpatient clinics, both psychiatric and obstetric, and the inpatient women's psychiatric unit, one of only five in the country, as well as with physicians in the neonatal intensive care unit who care for babies with opioid withdrawal.

"The UAMS Psychiatric Research Institute is providing outstanding specialized services for pregnant and postpartum women with opioid use disorder," Griffin said. "I have made a point in my role managing Arkansas's portion of opioid settlement funds to prioritize programs and initiatives that will make a real difference in the fight against opioid abuse. I'm proud to support this fellowship and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have."

"This support from the Attorney General will be used to provide this critically important care and to train the next generation of psychiatrists to bring the needed expertise to treat women struggling with opioid use disorder. We are incredibly grateful for this visionary grant from Attorney General Griffin," said Laura Dunn, M.D., the director of the Psychiatric Research Institute and chair of the UAMS Department of Psychiatry.

PCMS Updated Directory Available Online

Instead of using that outdated paper directory from 2016, or older, click on the link below and see the ONLINE version that is updated constantly.

<https://www.pulaskicms.org/membership/directory/>

Little Rock School District Partners with Baptist Health College to Launch LPN Program for High School Students



The Little Rock School District (LRSD) is excited to announce a new partnership with Baptist Health College Little Rock, expanding student career opportunities through a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. In collaboration with the Metropolitan Career Technical Center, the program allows students from six area high schools to earn healthcare certifications, gain hands-on clinical experience, and graduate workforce-ready.

"Today is about more than just sharing good news," said Dr. Jermall Wright, LRSD Superintendent. "We are providing real, relevant learning for students who want to make an impact right now. This program aligns with our mission to prepare students for college, career, and life—equipping them with skills for high-demand fields like healthcare. We are grateful to Baptist Health College and our partners across Pulaski County for helping us empower these bright young minds." The partnership will allow students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an LPN license, opening doors to immediate employment or further education.

Baptist Health President and CEO Troy Wells emphasized the importance of innovation in attracting future healthcare professionals. "The demand for skilled workers has never been higher, and this partnership exemplifies how education and industry can come together to address that need," Wells stated. "We are honored to continue our collaboration with LRSD, offering students not just credentials but a strong foundation to build future careers in healthcare. Programs like this will ensure that our community has access to exceptional care for years to come." Wells recognized several key team members for their role in the program's development and noted that students will train in the college's state-of-the-art simulation center.

Shameka Montgomery, Director of Career and Technical Education for LRSD, highlighted the collaboration's life-changing impact. "This partnership is a game-changer. Our students now have the chance to earn a diploma, a college degree, and an LPN license—all before they even turn 18," Montgomery said. "We thank Baptist

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Health for their dedication and the many individuals from both organizations who worked tirelessly over the past two years to make this vision a reality. Programs like this make it possible for students to explore their futures without financial burden." Montgomery added that the inaugural cohort includes 14 students from high schools across the region, and many of these students began with a paid summer internship supported by the City of Little Rock.

Metropolitan Career Technical Center was awarded a \$192,158 grant from the Office of Skills Development, a division of the Arkansas Department of Commerce, which pays the fees for participating students to attend the LPN program at no cost.

The LRSD-Baptist Health LPN program exemplifies how innovative partnerships can create new opportunities for students, strengthen the workforce, and foster a stronger, healthier community.



Dr. Preksha Vankawala

Preksha Vankawala, MD, Joins Baptist Health Gastroenterology Clinic

Baptist Health Gastroenterology Clinic in Little Rock recently welcomed gastroenterologist Preksha Vankawala, MD.

Dr. Vankawala, a native of Cedar Hill, Texas, earned her medical education from the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine.

She completed residency training in internal medicine and a fellowship in gastroenterology at Jackson

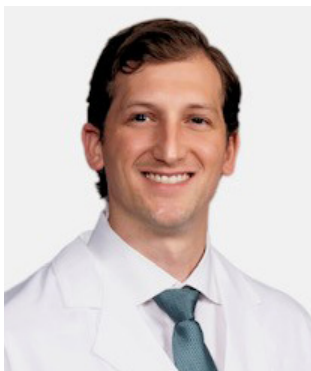
Memorial Hospital/University of Miami as well as an advanced endoscopy fellowship at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center of Dallas.

"My practice philosophy is to provide the best care possible in the safest yet most effective manner available," Dr. Vankawala said. "I strive to have clear communication with my patients so that they feel comfortable and confident in the care they receive."

Dr. Vankawala is board certified in internal medicine and gastroenterology.

<https://www.facebook.com/Pulaski-County-Medical-Society-100260252095789>

Foot and Ankle Surgeon, Derrick Henry, M.D. Joins OrthoArkansas as Foot and Ankle Specialist



Dr. Derrick Henry

OrthoArkansas is proud to welcome Derrick Henry, M.D., as the newest addition to its team of specialists. Dr. Henry, a boardcertified orthopedic surgeon, brings his expertise in foot and ankle care to patients throughout Central Arkansas. He treats foot and ankle conditions, hindfoot,

midfoot, and forefoot pain, arthritis, trauma, deformities, bunions/hallux valgus, and sports and ligamentous injuries.

Dr. Henry earned his medical degree and completed his residency in Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where he trained from 2014 to 2023. Following his residency, he further

specialized in Foot and Ankle Orthopedics through a fellowship at the renowned Campbell Clinic in Memphis.

"My goal is to see patients return to improved activity and function, transforming their worst day into significant improvement by the end of treatment," said Dr. Henry. His approach combines a deep understanding of orthopedic biomechanics with a patient-centered focus, aiming to provide personalized care to those suffering from foot and ankle issues.

"Dr. Henry is a talented specialist with a wealth of surgical excellence and a commitment to patient care. I'm confident his expertise will play a pivotal role in delivering the highest quality of care," said Foot and Ankle Surgeon, Troy Ardoin, M.D.

Dr. Henry will be available to see patients at OrthoArkansas' locations in Little RockMidtown, North Little Rock, and Benton.

Kidney Care Center Welcomes Two New Doctors

Kidney Care Center is pleased to welcome Dr. Jahanzeb Khan and Dr. Umair Ali to its practice.



Dr. Jahanzeb Khan

Jahanzeb Khan, MD completed his Internal Medicine Residency from Baptist Health North Little Rock in 2022 and UAMS Nephrology Fellowship training in 2024. He joined Kidney Care Center in mid-2024 as the fourth physician in our expanding group. Dr. Khan has been

an Arkansas resident since 2014 and lives here with his wife and son. He enjoys travel and exploring "The Natural State".

Umair Ali, MD obtained a Cardiology fellowship in 2019

from the college of Physician and Surgeons Pakistan and a cardiology residency at Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, Pakistan. In 2021 he was accepted into the Nephrology fellowship at University of Arkansas Medical Science in Little Rock graduating December 2023. Dr. Ali enjoys outdoor activities in Arkansas, especially national parks, hiking trails or fun at water parks.

Kidney Care Center has also expanded our clinics to better serve Central Arkansas. Our Sherwood clinic now accepts patients Monday through Thursday and in Little Rock, Monday through Friday. We are accepting new patients, please call 501-588-1100 for more information.



Dr. Umair Ali