



# PULASKI COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY News

February 2023

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think physicians of Pulaski County Medical Society.

## Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas Awards UAMS 3 Grants To Improve Mental Health Treatment

The University of Arkansas  
for Medical Sciences (UAMS)  
recently received three grants  
from Arkansas Blue Cross  
and Blue Shield's Blue & You  
Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas aimed at strengthening programs  
treating Arkansans with mental illness.



Jessica Coker, M.D., an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, is the principal investigator in MAPS (Mental Health and Addiction Peer Support), a peer-support model for co-occurring substance use disorders within acute psychiatric units.

Supported by a \$122,389 grant from the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, Coker, along with Abigail Richison, M.D., will integrate a peer navigator assigned to the inpatient units at the UAMS Psychiatric Research Institute (PRI). The peer navigator will work specifically with patients dealing with substance use disorders.

"We're hoping this will support our overall goal in creating a dual diagnosis unit at PRI that treats patients with both mental health and addiction problems," said Coker.

A grant worth \$149,984 was awarded to Nikki Edge, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Medicine's Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. Edge is project director of a program designed to test a new depression intervention for the parents of young children.

Working with physicians in UAMS' family medicine clinics, Edge and her team will help the medical professionals treating women with children

*Continued on page 3*



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*continued from page 1*

between the ages of 18 months and 6 years of age to recognize how symptoms of depression can impact the whole family.

"We want them to think about both the parents and the kids, because symptoms of depression can make it harder for parents to do the things they might normally do with their children, like reading, playing or having consistent routines," said Edge.

A mother who screens positive for depression will be invited to participate in Edge's program, receiving parenting tips and support from a mental health professional as well as care from their family medicine physicians.

"Most physicians understand and carefully watch for postpartum depression, but after that it can fall off people's radar. We're trying to pick up where typical health care sometimes falls off," Edge said.

A grant worth \$90,230 was awarded to Tisha Deen, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and the director of Behavioral Health Integration for primary care and population health services, to implement psychiatric consulting using a collaborative

care model in UAMS' primary care clinics. The program will allow patients to receive psychiatric care through their primary care team in collaboration with a UAMS mental health care provider.

A lack of mental health care in rural areas in Arkansas, which ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of prevalence of mental health problems and access to mental health treatment, led to Deen's concept of providing support to primary care physicians.

"We're going to work with behavioral health care managers to help them identify patients who need help with anxiety and depression," said Deen, who will be training the behavioral health care managers and primary care teams how to work effectively with a UAMS psychiatrist and provide care to patients with psychiatric needs.

"We're trying to help physicians treat patients who do not need necessarily need intensive psychiatric care, but are also cases that more complex than traditional primary care providers would be comfortable treating on their own," said Deen, adding that the program fills a gap in care that exists in rural Arkansas.

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## Arkansas Department of Health, UAMS, and Count the Kicks Partner to Launch Stillbirth Prevention Campaign Throughout Arkansas

### Goal to Save 86 Babies Every Year<sup>1</sup>

The Arkansas [Department of Health](#) and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences ([UAMS](#)) are partnering with *Count the Kicks*, an evidence-based stillbirth prevention campaign, to educate expectant parents in Arkansas about the importance of tracking a baby's movements daily in the third trimester of pregnancy.

Stillbirth is a national public health crisis that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For Arkansas families, 1 in every 138 pregnancies end in stillbirth,<sup>2</sup> and families in the state are 10 times more likely to lose a baby to stillbirth than to SIDS. [Recent data](#) shows



the devastating impact of COVID-19 on placentas and babies. Doctors have discovered what they are calling SARS-CoV-2 placentitis, a condition in which the virus attacks the placenta and cuts off oxygen to the baby.<sup>3</sup>

In the U.S. the annual number of stillbirths (defined as the loss of a baby at 20 weeks or greater during pregnancy) far exceeds the number of deaths among children aged 0-14 years from preterm birth, SIDS, accidents, drownings, guns, fire and flu combined. Research shows that nearly 30% of stillbirths can be prevented when expectant

*Continued on page 4*

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*continued from page 3*

parents are educated on the importance of tracking their baby's movements daily starting at 28 weeks.

Research shows a change in a baby's movements in the third trimester is an early red flag. By using *Count the Kicks*, expectant parents can increase the chances of their baby arriving safely. *Count the Kicks* has a free app available in the iOS and Google Play app stores that provides expectant parents a simple, noninvasive way to monitor their babies' well-being every day. After a few days using the app, expectant parents begin to see a pattern, a normal amount of time it takes their baby to get to 10 movements. If their baby's "normal" changes during the third trimester, this could be a sign of potential problems and is an indication that the expectant parent should call her health care provider.

Fort Smith mom Elaina Murry knows first-hand the importance of paying attention to her baby's movements. She was using the *Count the Kicks* app, and about a month before her due date, Murry noticed Zelda's movements change significantly. Murry mentioned it to her health care provider, and after further testing, they made the decision to deliver Zelda early.

"Even though her nonstress test had looked OK, her decreased movements were a harbinger of fetal distress. She was found to have her umbilical cord wrapped tightly around her neck two times, which was preventing her from turning out of breech position and would have likely led to significant complications had we delayed the delivery much longer," Murry said. After delivery, Murry's providers discovered an issue with her placenta that also was contributing to Zelda's distress. "Using the *Count the Kicks* app was definitely a good choice. The app was an important part of my final days of pregnancy and contributed to the overall picture of needing to deliver her early for both her health and mine."

Thanks to the partnership with ADH and UAMS, maternal health providers, birthing hospitals, home visitors, social service agencies, childbirth educators and other providers in Arkansas can order FREE *Count the Kicks* educational materials (available at [www.CountTheKicks.org](http://www.CountTheKicks.org)) to help them have the kick counting conversation with expectant

parents. These materials include posters, brochures, and app download cards in English and Spanish.

"The Arkansas Department of Health is committed to improving birth outcomes for families in our state, and we believe *Count the Kicks* provides a solution to help save babies now. We encourage anyone who works with expectant parents to order free *Count the Kicks* educational materials to share with the communities you serve. Together we can help more families in our state have a healthy birth outcome," said Dr. William Greenfield, MD, MBA, FACOG, medical director for family health at the Arkansas Department of Health and a professor in the UAMS Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

"We are very excited to partner with the Department of Health and Count the Kicks to bring this program to Arkansas moms," said Nirvana Manning, MD, NCMP, FACOG, UAMS Director for the Women and Infant's Health Service Line at UAMS. "The smartphone app is very easy to use, and it provides tremendous peace of mind knowing that your baby is healthy in the final weeks of pregnancy. We hope to bring similar results to Arkansas like they've experienced in Iowa and reduce the number of stillbirths in our state."

According to CDC Wonder, approximately 268 Arkansas babies are stillborn each year.<sup>4</sup> In Iowa, where *Count the Kicks* began, the state's stillbirth rate dropped by nearly 32% in the first 10 years of the campaign (2008-2018). Iowa's rate went from 33<sup>rd</sup> worst in the country to one of the lowest, while the country's stillbirth rate remained relatively flat. Through this collaboration, ADH is hoping to bring the same success to Arkansas, which would save approximately 86 babies in the state each year.<sup>5</sup>

CDC data shows that every year in the U.S., approximately 700 women will die from childbirth complications, and 22,300 babies will be stillborn. The risk is even greater for Black women who, according to the CDC, are twice as likely to lose a baby to stillbirth than their white neighbor, colleague or friend. Black women are also three times more likely to die of pregnancy complications. For Black women in the U.S., 1 in every 97 pregnancies ends in stillbirth.

*Continued on page 5*

## Baptist Health First in Arkansas to Use Innovative Paragonix SherpaPak® Cardiac Transport System for Heart Preservation

Baptist Health is the first transplant center in Arkansas to utilize the SherpaPak® Cardiac Transport System (CTS) from Paragonix Technologies.

The SherpaPak® CTS provides a safe and effective way for hearts to be preserved during the transplant process, marking the healing ministry's commitment to be a leader in heart health services.

Replacing consumer-grade cooler and ice systems that have been used historically, the SherpaPak® CTS – paired with the Paragonix app and web portal – provides constant temperature and location tracking and real-time updates to the transplant team. It delivers information critical to this complicated surgery to the team.

"Given the scarcity of donor hearts, we know the importance of doing everything we can to better preserve them during transport," said Baptist Health Transplant Institute Program Director Dr. John Ransom.



"This device allows us to preserve the heart in a more natural state – ultimately better serving the patient with improved technology."

While it may look like a traditional cooler, the SherpaPak® device fully suspends the heart in a pressure-controlled and sterile environment. The rigid canister system is the leading FDA-cleared and CE-marked preservation device for heart transportation.

The SherpaPak® CTS provides a consistent, stable thermal environment. According to a recent report comparing post-transplant outcomes between the device and ice storage, investigators noted a one-year survival rate of 96.4 percent in patients where the Paragonix system was used, translating to an increase of 8.7 percent in one-year survival when compared to traditional ice transport.

In 2022, over 1 in 3 donor hearts in the United States were preserved and transported with the SherpaPak® CTS.

## Arkansas Department of Health, UAMS, and Count the Kicks Partner to Launch Stillbirth Prevention Campaign Throughout Arkansas

*continued from page 4*

### References

1. Number based on 5-year average stillbirth rate, multiplied by the 32% reduction seen in Iowa. Stillbirth data is from CDC Wonder. Note stillbirth rate is calculated by: Fetal Deaths/Total of Live Births + Fetal Deaths\*1,000.
2. Number based on dividing 1,000 by the 5-year average stillbirth rate. Stillbirth data is from CDC Wonder.
3. Linehan L, O'Donoghue K, Dineen S, White J, Higgins JR, Fitzgerald B. SARS-CoV-2 placentitis: An uncommon complication of maternal COVID-19. *Placenta*. 2021 Jan 15;104:261-266. doi: 10.1016/j.placenta.2021.01.012. Epub 2021 Jan 11. PMID: 33465727; PMCID: PMC7832228.
4. Number based on the 5-year average stillbirth numbers, total stillbirth data from CDC Wonder.
5. Number based on 5-year average stillbirth rate, multiplied by the 32% reduction seen in Iowa. Stillbirth data is from CDC Wonder. Note stillbirth rate is calculated by: Fetal Deaths/Total of Live Births + Fetal Deaths\*1,000.

## Healthgrades Ranks UAMS in Top 5% of Nation for Brain Surgery; Praises Stroke Program

Healthgrades ranks the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) among the top 5% of hospitals nationwide for cranial neurosurgery in 2023.

The designation by Healthgrades, the leading marketplace connecting doctors and patients, reflects UAMS' outstanding trial outcomes for cranial neurosurgery and distinguishes UAMS as one of the nation's leading hospitals for cranial neurosurgery, or brain surgery.

It is a step up from last year, when Healthgrades ranked UAMS in the top 10% of hospitals for cranial neurosurgery.

Healthgrades also bestowed a 2023 Cranial Neurosurgery Excellence Award on UAMS for the second year in a row. The Specialty Excellence Awards recognize the top 10% of hospitals across the country in 17 specialty care areas.

"Achieving this award validates our efforts to make sure that Arkansans have access to the most up-to-date surgical technology and surgical options available for treatment of brain tumors, brain aneurysms, movement disorders and epilepsy," said J.D. Day, M.D., chair of the UAMS Department of Neurosurgery.

Healthgrades also honored UAMS as a Five-Star Recipient for Cranial Neurosurgery and, for the second consecutive year, Treatment of Stroke.

"This accomplishment reflects the consistently outstanding care that stroke patients receive at our UAMS Comprehensive Stroke Center and the dedication of our stroke team to improving outcomes for Arkansans suffering from stroke," said Marzella Backus, MNsc, RN, director of the UAMS stroke program. "We are very fortunate to have the ability to offer this level of care and expertise."

"The five-star recognition of our stroke program is a testament to the dedication and expertise of our UAMS stroke team," said Sanjeeva Reddy Onteddu, M.D., an associate professor of neurology who is the stroke program's medical director. "UAMS has a strong commitment to providing the highest level of stroke care available by maintaining the most stringent stroke standards."

Healthgrades evaluated patient mortality and complication rates for 31 of the most common conditions



*Alicia Dreyer, a representative of Healthgrades, presents a trophy to neurosurgeon J.D. Day, M.D., chair of the UAMS Department of Neurosurgery; neurosurgeon Analiz Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., and Ebonye Green, APRN in the Department of Neurosurgery.*

and procedures at nearly 4,500 hospitals across the country to identify the top-performing hospitals for specialty care.

"This year's analysis revealed significant variation in patient outcomes between hospitals with a 2023 Healthgrades Specialty Excellence Award and hospitals that did not receive the award," according to Healthgrades.

"From 2019-2020, patients treated at hospitals receiving the Cranial Neurosurgery Excellence Award have, on average, a 35.1% lower risk of dying than if they were treated at hospitals that did not receive the award," it said, citing an analysis of data for Medicare patients.

The ratings are independent and impartial. Hospitals can neither opt-in or opt-out of the ratings, nor can they submit their own data.

"We commend UAMS for their ongoing commitment to providing high-quality care to patients undergoing cranial neurosurgery," said Brad Bowman, M.D., chief medical officer and head of data science at Healthgrades. "Consumers can feel confident that recipients of the 2023 Cranial Neurosurgery Excellence Award have demonstrated their ability to deliver consistently exceptional outcomes."



## CHI St. Vincent Releases Community Health Needs Assessment and Strategy to Address Significant Healthcare Needs in Arkansas Communities

CHI St. Vincent, an Arkansas-based nonprofit health system with four hospitals and a network of clinics serving Central and Southwest Arkansas, has released its three year [Community Health Needs Assessment](#). The report identifies significant healthcare needs in the Arkansas communities the faith-based health system serves as well as specific plans to help address those needs over the coming three years.

"This document and the areas of need we identified will serve as the foundation for our healing ministry's strategic healthcare initiatives for the coming years," said CHI St. Vincent CEO Chad Aduddell. "We have learned from experience that by prioritizing and planning evidence-based solutions to meet those needs, we can make the greatest possible impact on the communities we serve."

Previous Community Health Needs Assessments identified significant health challenges in the state like substance abuse and treatment, allowing CHI St. Vincent to focus resources into projects like establishing the [Addiction Recovery Program](#) at CHI St. Vincent Infirmary in Little Rock in 2021. The latest Community Health Needs Assessment identifies the following healthcare needs that the healing ministry will focus resources into addressing over the coming three years:

- Access to Primary Care
- Access to Mental Health Care
- Basic Health Knowledge and Awareness
- Chronic Condition Education
- Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking
- Food and Nutrition Education
- Substance Abuse Treatment and Education

Some initiatives to help address these needs include the establishment of a Southwest Little Rock Mission Clinic to provide primary care and access to community care for a severely medically underserved area in Southwest Little Rock; a Connected Community Network of social, medical and behavioral health services to provide easier access to post acute care, especially for poor and homeless communities; and expanding partnerships with

local law enforcement to improve public awareness and response to the growing threat of violence and trafficking in local communities.

"These are significant challenges faced by the communities we serve and while they are certainly not the only challenges, this effort allows us to focus not just our healthcare resources, but also focus on building strong partnerships to make a notable impact in these areas together over the next three years," said Aduddell. "CHI St. Vincent is fortunate to have strong local relationships with government agencies and other groups that truly care about the people of Arkansas. Now with additional regional and national support, like the CommonSpirit Health-Human Trafficking Initiative, we can further amplify the good work already taking place."

To identify the healthcare needs in the assessment through 2024, CHI St. Vincent solicited primary feedback from communities through Personalized Community Surveys, online surveys, public feedback forms and publicly available research like the United Health Foundation's 2021 Report which ranked Arkansas 43rd in the nation for Access to Care. The complete Community Health Needs Assessment and correlating implementation strategies are available on the CHI St. Vincent website: [chistvincent.com/health-wellness/community-needs-assessment](https://chistvincent.com/health-wellness/community-needs-assessment)



## UAMS Joins Community Collaboration to Create Green Spaces at Little Rock Elementary Schools

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health has received funding from the National Institutes of Health to support its role in a collaboration to improve school playgrounds in Little Rock.

"This is a great opportunity and speaks to the importance of the work being done to improve schools in our city," said Michael Thomsen, Ph.D., professor in the college's Health Policy and Management Department who holds the Governor Sidney S. McMath Endowed Chair in Obesity Prevention.

The Little Rock Green Schoolyard Initiative is a partnership between the City of Little Rock and the Little Rock School District (LRSD). It is receiving technical assistance from the Children & Nature Network. UAMS joined the effort last year and will be studying how green schoolyards can increase physical activity and improve children's experiences at school. The initial pilot sites are Stephens Elementary and Washington Elementary, both of which are LRSD community schools.

Marvin Burton, principal of Little Rock Metro Vocational High and the district community school program liaison, said community schools can create a sense of neighborhood pride, economic empowerment and — most importantly — serve as an area resource hub. Therefore, this green schoolyard initiative complements the vision the district has for its community schools.

"Quality greenspaces can increase the community presence in afterschool activities and lead to better support of the students, teachers and staff of the schools," Burton said. "They can also lead to better community policing of the school grounds, and it increases the possibilities of local residents being out and having a good time in nature."

Priya Cook, director of Green Schoolyards for Healthy Communities for Children & Nature Network, noted how equity-based, green schoolyard programs can improve family bonds and community pride. She also highlighted how the initiative has been successful in cities similar in size to Little Rock.

"Green schoolyard programs expand kids' access to nature, which is important," she said. "The aim is to achieve equitable park access, increase contact with nature and promote outdoor learning. The program ensures that the transformed spaces remain ideal places for gatherings, recreation and restoration."

"This is a community-led initiative," said Jennifer Glasgow, chief educational officer for the City of Little Rock. "We value what the community wants to see. We'll use input from students, parents of students, teachers and people who live in the communities."

"This project can renew the students' interest in attending school, which makes learning an easier and more enjoyable experience for everyone involved."

The initiative also provides an opportunity to incorporate outdoor experiences into science lessons, Glasgow added.

"We want students to have an area where they can have access to great equipment and learn about nature," she said. "The green spaces can help with the students' social-emotional learning. That's another reason why this initiative is so important."

Overall, the initiative emphasizes the use of nature to create a well-rounded environment for students and community members.

"As a community gains empowerment, the more likely the community becomes for potential economic development," Burton said. "The more we can garner support from the residents, the more it will enhance the pride in the community and support for the school. That sets the stage to revitalize a community. That all feeds into supporting the students and their academic success."

"The NIH is the nation's premier biomedical research agency. The fact that they are interested in what is happening in Little Rock is a real complement to the good work taking place in our city," Thomsen said. "Our study will show how green schoolyards affect physical activity and will help us understand how these kinds of initiatives improve community health."