



PULASKI COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY *News*

January 2026

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

President's Message

Dear Colleagues:

Since 2022, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve you as a member of the Board of Directors. During that time, I have enjoyed the opportunity to connect with many of you, to learn about your practices and the issues that are most important to you professionally and personally, and to develop genuine friendships. Given the importance of the Pulaski County Medical Society to our profession and

individual practices, I am honored to be afforded the opportunity and humbly accept the responsibility to serve as President.

For the past year the Society has continued its exemplary work advocating for physicians and promoting access to quality medical care in Pulaski County. We have continued to fund scholarships for incoming freshman medical students at UAMS. Likewise, we have continued to support to local student lead projects such as 12th Street Health and Wellness Pop-Up Clinics and the Vision Without Limits Glaucoma testing at the 12th Street Health and Wellness clinic.



Dr. Leticia Jones

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Phishing for Doctors: Phone Phishing Scams on the Rise

Rana McSpadden, FACMPE, Medical Practice Consultant and Analyst, SVMIC

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Imagine that you are in the middle of a busy workday, and suddenly you get a call from a DEA agent. He gives his name and badge number, and the caller ID shows a DEA phone number. He discloses various identifiers (such as your or license number) and asks if these are correct. Of course they are, so you confirm "yes." The agent then claims your NPI number has been used to write prescriptions for narcotics across multiple states. He goes further to state there is a warrant out for your arrest unless you cooperate. In shock and confusion, you agree. He asks for your bank account numbers, Social Security Number, and date of birth. You hesitate, thinking something doesn't feel right. At this point, he becomes aggressive and passes the call to his supervising agent. The new agent begins making additional threats of prosecution and imprisonment and claims your DEA registration will be revoked. In fear, you give the agent what he is asking for. Finally, he states you must pay \$10,000 in gift cards or bitcoin for fines and penalties, otherwise, the warrant remains active, and you will be arrested.

While this is not an exact scenario, variations of it occur daily in the healthcare community. This is a form of phishing called "vishing" (voice phishing), where scammers impersonate legitimate individuals or entities to trick victims into disclosing sensitive information. They may impersonate someone from the practice's IT vendor or internet provider to gain access to the EHR, or they can impersonate law enforcement officials or IRS agents to extort money from the victim.

In the above scenario, scammers deployed multiple tactics that gave the scam a level of legitimacy. First, they used the name and credentials of legitimate DEA agents they were able to find online. If anyone were to question this, a quick search would link that name to the DEA. Secondly, the scammers used modern telephone technology, such as Voice over IP (VoIP)[i] to transmit falsified caller ID information to display the phone number of one of the DEA agencies, otherwise known as caller ID spoofing[ii]. Next, they already had the NPI and license number of the provider. The NPI and license numbers are publicly available through sites such as the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) and state license verification websites. Scammers only needed a name to look up the numbers on these sites. This information may also have been involved in one of the many data leaks that have occurred over the past few years. Once sensitive and identifying information is obtained by scammers, it is generally sold through various underground websites and used for fraudulent activity. Finally, the scammers used fear and urgency to pressure the victim into giving them additional sensitive information and extort money. As shown in a [recording](#) by the DEA, scammers can be relentless in pressuring their victims into complying with the scam.

To protect yourself from this and other vishing scams, it is important to be suspicious anytime a caller claims to be from a legitimate source and begins asking for sensitive information or making demands.

- If the caller claims to be from one of your vendors, your bank or creditor, law or government officials, hang up and call back using a verifiable number. Verifiable phone numbers can be found on official websites. Do not use the number that shows on the caller ID in case this is a spoofed number.
- Be cautious if the caller is pressuring you for immediate payment, especially if they are demanding bitcoin or gift cards. No law enforcement or government official will ever demand any type of payment over the telephone, especially during an initial contact.
- Use call blocking technology to limit the number of spam and calls that are likely scams. As certain numbers are reported as being fraudulent or spam, this technology can filter these calls from being completed or can label them as being likely scams or spam.

In an October 2024 press release[iii], the DEA reminded healthcare professionals they will never be contacted by phone to request personal information, or to demand money. Any communication from the DEA will be in the form of an official letter or in person. They ask that anyone receiving a call from someone claiming to be from the DEA to report the call to the FBI at www.ic3.gov. They additionally request a report be made to the Federal Trade Commission at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

Another vishing technique recently used by scammers is artificial intelligence (AI)-generated vocal impersonation, also known as vocal cloning. In a [December 2024 PSA](#), the FBI described vocal cloning:

"Criminals can use AI-generated audio to impersonate well-known public figures or personal relations to elicit payments.

If you are a victim of vishing, or any other phishing scam, in addition to reporting it to the above sites, you may also need to report it to local law enforcement. If financial accounts were compromised, such as bank or credit card accounts, you will also need to notify those financial institutions so they can either monitor the accounts or close and reopen new ones.

In conclusion, protecting yourself from vishing requires a combination of awareness, vigilance, and proactive measures. By staying informed about common vishing tactics and maintaining a cautious approach, you can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to these scams and safeguard your personal information.

If you have questions about cybersecurity, HIPAA, or how to access to SVMIC resources, call 800-342-2239 or email Contact@svmic.com.

If you experience a cybersecurity or other HIPAA related incident, contact SVMIC as soon as possible by calling 800-342-2239 and ask to speak with the Claims department.

Other individuals in your organization may benefit from these articles and resources, such as your administrator, privacy or security officer, or information technology professional. They can sign up for a Vantage account [here](#).

[1] Voice over IP (VoIP)- allows users to make voice calls over broadband internet connections.

Federal Communications Commission: [https://www.fcc.gov/general/voice-over-internet-protocol-voip#:~:text=Voice%20over%20Internet%20Protocol%20\(VoIP\)%2C%20is%20a%20technology%20that,\(or%20analog\)%20phone%20line](https://www.fcc.gov/general/voice-over-internet-protocol-voip#:~:text=Voice%20over%20Internet%20Protocol%20(VoIP)%2C%20is%20a%20technology%20that,(or%20analog)%20phone%20line).

[1] Federal Communications Commission: <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/spoofing>

[1] United States Drug Enforcement Administration: <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2024/10/24/dea-warns-healthcare-workers-impersonation-scam-targeting-doctors-and>

[1] FBI PSA on Generative Artificial Intelligence to Facilitate Financial Fraud: <https://www.ic3.gov/PSA/2024/PSA241203>

[ii] Federal Communications Commission: <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/spoofing>

[iii] United States Drug Enforcement Administration: <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2024/10/24/dea-warns-healthcare-workers-impersonation-scam-targeting-doctors-and>

[iv] FBI PSA on Generative Artificial Intelligence to Facilitate Financial Fraud: <https://www.ic3.gov/PSA/2024/PSA241203>

President's Letter

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These initiatives and their positive impact in our community would not be possible without your unshakable commitment and support. As a personal prerogative and on behalf of the Board and Society, I want to thank you for past support and to encourage you to actively look for ways to deepen your engagement.

I also hope that you will make early plans to join us at this year's annual membership meeting, which affords us the opportunity to unplug, reflect, network, and celebrate worthy professionals and past accomplishments. At our most recent annual meeting, we were able to celebrate Dr. Debra Morrison with the 2025 President's Award in recognition of her lifetime of outstanding

contributions to medicine. I applaud Dr. Morrison for her contributions and well-deserved receipt of the President's Award and look forward to identifying the next worthy recipient.

With your support, this year we hope to continue to build on the momentum gained over the past few years and to continue to make a difference for our physicians and local community. In that vein, we value your input and participation. We hope to hear from you throughout this year and look forward to seeing you at the next annual meeting in November 2026.

Sincerely,
Leticia Jones, MD

CHI St. Vincent Infirmary Accredited for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

Hospital Named Comprehensive Center with Obesity Medicine Qualifications

[CHI St. Vincent Infirmary](#), a leading hospital serving Little Rock and Central Arkansas, has received accreditation as a Comprehensive Center with Obesity Medicine Qualifications by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP). In addition, general surgeon Brandon Ingram, MD, has been recognized as an MBSAQIP Verified Surgeon.

This accreditation acknowledges CHI St. Vincent Infirmary's commitment to providing and supporting quality improvement and patient safety efforts for metabolic and bariatric surgery patients. MBSAQIP has verified that CHI St. Vincent Infirmary meets the needs of its patients by providing multidisciplinary, high-quality, patient-centered care.

"We are thrilled to be recognized by the American College of Surgeons for our metabolic and bariatric surgery program," said Dr. William Jones, President of CHI St. Vincent Infirmary. "At CHI St. Vincent Infirmary,

our highest commitment is providing quality healthcare for our patients. This accreditation speaks to that commitment and to the excellence of our doctors and nurses who make our metabolic and bariatric program one of the best in Arkansas."

Among the list of strengths included by MBSAQIP in its accreditation report was the leadership of Dr. Ingram, who was cited as being instrumental in maintaining exemplary quality standards in bariatric care. Dr. Ingram was recently honored across all CommonSpirit Health facilities with the Quality and Patient Safety Award for 2025.

"This accreditation as a Comprehensive Center with Obesity Medicine Qualifications demonstrates that CHI St. Vincent Infirmary is the top choice for patients who need metabolic or bariatric surgery," said Dr. Brandon Ingram, bariatric surgeon. "I'm honored to be recognized by the American College of Surgeons, and I'm so proud of the work my team does every day to provide the best outcomes for our patients."

UAMS Announces 40 New Full-Tuition Scholarships for Incoming Students in Fall 2026

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) announced December 19, 2025 a new initiative for attracting some of the best Arkansas students to UAMS. The program will provide full tuition and fees for 40 exceptional students entering UAMS, including the College of Medicine, with the fall 2026 semester.

"The UAMS Chancellor's Scholars Program reflects our university's deep commitment to academic excellence, service, and the future of health care in Arkansas," said Interim Chancellor C. Lowry Barnes, M.D. "This program embodies our belief that investing in talent — paired with a shared responsibility to serve — strengthens our institution and our state. I am confident that the students selected for this program will become leaders who advance health, education, and discovery in our state for generations to come."

The scholars will include:

- College of Medicine – 15 scholarships (Doctor of Medicine, 4 years)
- College of Health Professions – 5 scholarships:
 - Audiology (AuD, 4 years) – 1 scholarship
 - Speech-Language Pathology (MS, 2 years) – 2 scholarships
 - Dietetics (MS, 15 months) – 2 scholarships
- College of Nursing – 10 scholarships (Traditional BSN, 2 years – 5 scholarships; Accelerated BSN, 15 months – 5 scholarships)
- College of Pharmacy – 5 scholarships (Doctor of Pharmacy, 4 years)
- College of Public Health – 5 scholarships (Master of Public Health, 2 years)



Recipients will commit to living and working in Arkansas following completion of their academic program (and residency or fellowship, where applicable) for a period equal to the length of the scholarship award. This mutual commitment ensures that the benefits of this program extend well beyond the individual scholar and contribute meaningfully to the health and well-being of communities across Arkansas.

Applicants must be Arkansas residents and be admitted to an eligible UAMS academic program beginning in fall 2026. Students who completed an undergraduate degree outside Arkansas are eligible for the scholarships.

Chancellor's Scholars will be selected based on academic merit, evaluated through a holistic review of the applicant's academic record. Selection will consider objective measures of academic performance, the rigor and consistency of prior coursework, and demonstrated commitment to scholarly excellence, as assessed by the admissions or scholarship selection committee within each college.

"The UAMS Chancellor Scholars Program is a significant investment in our students, who are the future of health care in our state," said Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., provost and chief strategy officer. "I want to thank Dr. Barnes for his leadership on this issue."

Baptist Health First in Arkansas to Offer Abbott TriClip™, Minimally Invasive Therapy For Heart Valve Condition

Baptist Health's cardiology team in Little Rock now provides Abbott's TriClip™ transcatheter edge-to-edge repair (TEER) system, an advanced, minimally invasive treatment option for tricuspid regurgitation (TR), a condition where the tricuspid valve leaks. This innovative therapy eliminates the necessity for open-heart surgery.

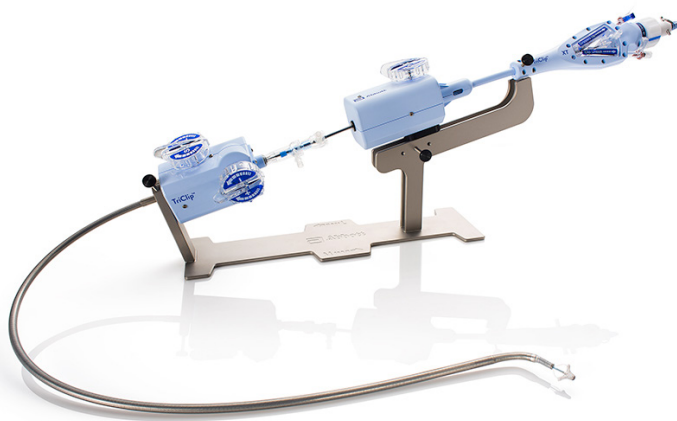
The first-in-class TriClip system has demonstrated both safety and effectiveness, leading to an overall improvement in patient well-being.

"We are thrilled to be the first in Arkansas to offer this technology," cardiologist Evan Watts, MD, said. "The TriClip system provides a much-needed treatment option for patients suffering from tricuspid regurgitation, offering them a minimally invasive way to improve their heart function and overall quality of life."

TriClip is delivered to the heart via a catheter inserted through the femoral vein in the leg and works by clipping together a portion of the leaflets of the tricuspid valve to reduce the backflow of blood.

Designed specifically for the right side of the heart and the tricuspid valve's complex anatomy, the innovative TriClip and steerable guiding catheter systems allow physicians to independently grasp and effectively clip leaflets of the tricuspid valve to reduce the regurgitation. This minimally invasive approach allows the heart to pump blood more efficiently and relieve symptoms of TR, which improves the quality of life for patients.

Tricuspid valve regurgitation is a condition in which the valve between the two right heart chambers (right ventricle and right atrium) don't close properly, allowing blood to flow backward into the right atrium of the heart.



The disease is often debilitating, causing symptoms such as shortness of breath and fatigue, and when left untreated, may progress into conditions such as atrial fibrillation (AF), heart failure and, ultimately, death.

Traditionally, the only treatment options for TR have been surgery, which is rarely

performed due to the complexity of the procedure and high risks involved, and medical therapy, which is usually not successful in reducing TR. Abbott's TriClip device offers a critical treatment alternative for individuals affected by this condition.

Abbott recently announced that the TriClip TEER system received FDA approval.

For more information about the Abbott TriClip™ transcatheter edge-to-edge repair (TEER) system, visit [Baptist-Health.com](https://www.baptist-health.com).



UAMS Study Reveals Gaps in Obstetric Emergency Preparedness in Arkansas Emergency Departments

A study from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) finds that while obstetric emergencies are common in Arkansas emergency departments (EDs), many hospitals lack key protocols, training and capabilities needed to manage life-threatening maternal complications.

UAMS researchers surveyed managers from 51 EDs, representing 61% of all hospital-based EDs statewide, to evaluate their experiences, capabilities and training related to obstetric emergencies. In the previous year, 43% of EDs reported a birth, 71% managed urgent transports of pregnant or postpartum patients, and nearly half experienced an unanticipated adverse maternal outcome.

Despite the frequency of obstetric cases, the study found:

- Only 31% of EDs required documentation of pregnancy status in the electronic health record.
- 46% had no field to record postpartum status — an important gap given that many maternal deaths occur after delivery.
- Fewer than half (46%) had provided any obstetric emergency training in the past two years.

“These numbers reinforce that every ED in the state — whether or not it has labor and delivery services — must be prepared to manage obstetric emergencies,” said Jennifer Callaghan-Koru, Ph.D., associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and executive director of the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative. Callaghan-Koru is also an associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education in the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health.

Even hospitals without obstetrics units frequently care for high-risk patients, particularly in rural areas where more than 60% of Arkansas counties lack obstetric services. Differences in preparedness may contribute to maternal health inequities in Arkansas, a state with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation.

Faculty at UAMS are already working to address the gaps identified in this study through the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ARPQC). Luann Racher, M.D., associate professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at UAMS, develops and leads trainings for ED staff and emergency medical services throughout the state with the ARPQC.

“We are preparing ED staff to manage complications like pregnancy-related hypertensive emergencies, precipitous birth and postpartum hemorrhage through skills-based simulation trainings and standardized clinical algorithms,” Racher said.

Racher emphasized that improving emergency preparedness is essential in both hospitals with and without obstetric services — particularly as rural maternity units continue to close nationwide.

She noted that interest in training is strong among ED leaders, signaling readiness for statewide efforts to improve emergency preparedness and reduce maternal mortality.

“This level of interest demonstrates that ED leaders recognize the need and are motivated to strengthen maternal care across Arkansas,” Racher said. “We are proud of the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative’s ability to meet this need and support high-quality emergency medical care.”



Baptist Health Names Charmaine Estell Chief Nursing Officer in North Little Rock



Charmaine Estell

Charmaine Estell has been appointed as chief nursing officer at Baptist Health Medical Center-North Little Rock. Estell brings over two decades of dedicated service and leadership experience to this key executive position.

“Charmaine brings many years of leadership experience within Baptist Health and

has already successfully championed several new initiatives since joining our team,” said Cody Walker, president of Baptist Health Medical Center-North Little Rock. “Charmaine embodies our values, prioritizes our employees, and is a highly visible leader—making her an ideal fit to improve our patient care experiences.”

Estell’s journey with Baptist Health is a testament to the organization’s commitment to growing its own leaders. She first joined Baptist Health in September 2003 as a

nursing assistant while attending the Baptist School of Nursing, from which she graduated in December 2003. Her career began as a charge nurse and an Administrative RN III.

After eight years in these roles, Estell was promoted to unit supervisor in December 2011. She went on to serve as an associate director of nursing at Baptist Health Medical Center-Heber Springs and later at Baptist Health Medical Center-Hot Spring County.

Estell also advanced her education while serving in leadership roles, earning her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) in 2019 and a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) for the Executive Track in 2021. Prior to this latest promotion, she served as the system associate chief nursing officer, a role she was promoted to in 2024.

As CNO at Baptist Health Medical Center-North Little Rock, Estell’s goals include fostering the growth of new leaders and ensuring the organization achieves its strategic objectives.

Baptist Health Announces New Dates For ‘Cooking with Community Outreach’ Classes

Baptist Health Community Outreach is pleased to announce the latest schedule for its recurring “Cooking with Community Outreach” classes, which continue to empower community members to discover the fun and flavor of home cooking.

These popular, hands-on classes are led by registered dietitian Samantha Stadter and focus on simple, budget-friendly recipes.

Participants will learn cost-saving cooking tips and tricks to create delicious, healthy meals without overspending, all while connecting with fellow food enthusiasts. No prior cooking experience is necessary—just bring your appetite for fun and delicious food.

Classes are scheduled on select Thursdays from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Baptist Health Community Outreach building, 10117 Kanis Road in Little Rock. Upcoming class dates and recipes include:

- January 15: Apricot glazed chicken with veggies
- February 5: Parmesan risotto with pork and fresh green salad
- March 5: Zesty veggie quesadillas

Registration for each class will open three weeks prior to the date. Interested individuals can register online at bit.ly/BHcookingclass or by calling (501) 202-1540.

UAMS to Train 75 Community Health Workers with Support from Arkansas Office of Skills Development

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Institute for Community Health Innovation will work with partners to continue building the community health worker (CHW) workforce across the state after receiving \$375,000 in support from the Arkansas Office of Skills Development Training Grant Program.

The Office of Skills Development (OSD), an office within the division of Arkansas Workforce Connections in the Department of Commerce, strategically invests in all levels of the Arkansas workforce by raising education and skill levels, meeting the needs of companies operating in Arkansas, and balancing workforce and employer interests, leading to greater economic achievement for workers and companies.

The support from OSD will be used to train 75 community health workers over the next 18 months, focusing on rural counties throughout Arkansas. Earlier this year, Arkansas lawmakers established the Community Health Worker Act, formally establishing the role of CHWs and paving the way for CHWs to receive compensation for services from the Arkansas Medicaid Program or a health benefit plan.

"We've seen the incredible impact community health workers can have on communities across Arkansas — especially those in rural areas where people may face more challenges accessing health care," said Rosalinda Medrano, assistant director of community programs at

the institute. "We're excited to extend this work to more areas across Arkansas as we work with the Office of Skills Development to create a better state of health for all."

The institute developed the first CHW apprentice program in the United States, reducing the training time by half from two years to one. In partnership with the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association, the institute has trained more than 430 CHWs since 2022.

"The support from OSD, along with the support of our incredible partners, will help us create career opportunities and establish new, innovative pathways to health for communities across Arkansas," said Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., division director of the institute.

To supplement its CHW training program, the institute will work with partners to launch a perinatal CHW certification to focus on the specific needs of pregnant and postpartum moms.

In addition to its partnership with the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association, the institute will work with the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Doula Alliance of Arkansas, Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network, the Arkansas Hospital Association, Ujima Maternity Network, UAMS Regional Campuses and more as it trains CHWs across the state.



Dr. Teresa Nimmo

Dr. Teresa Nimmo named Adjunct Clinical Professor

The Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine has appointed Dr. Teresa Nimmo to the position of Adjunct Clinical Professor. This was in recognition of her dedication to students and providing training to develop compassionate and skilled physicians.

Congratulations Dr. Nimmo.