

THE TRIBUNE

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FAITH in Facts

PCORI-Funded Network Addresses COVID-19 Hotspots – Churches

A small packet of COVID-19-related posters and flyers from UAMS is making a big difference for the Greater Macedonia Baptist Church in Wilson (Mississippi County).

“There’s so much false information about COVID-19 you don’t know what to believe, and at this time it can be a death sentence,” the Rev. Bryant Whitted said. “Getting good information from professionals has really allowed life to change at our church.”

The COVID-19 toolkit is a product of the UAMS-based Arkansas Faith-Academic Initiatives for Transforming Health (FAITH) Network, and it is available for free to places of worship across Arkansas. The plain-language toolkit was created with input from the TRI-supported UAMS Center for Health Literacy.



Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, holds one of the signs she has made available to churches as part of a COVID-19 information toolkit.

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Leveraging a Trusted Network to Keep COVID-19 at Bay

With so much public confusion and even disbelief about official COVID-19 messaging, it is crucial for people to have credible sources they can trust. This is especially true in minority populations that are so disproportionately affected by the disease.

We are proud to report here on the work of Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, one of our KL2 Program graduates who founded and leads the Arkansas FAITH Network. What she started in 2012 as part of her KL2 project has matured into vital infrastructure for rural minority churches to address the top health issues of congregants in partnership with UAMS.

Like many researchers, with the coronavirus on the march, she refocused some of her efforts on COVID-19. She developed informational posters and flyers, and grateful church leaders across the state are displaying them. The

church leaders are also telling us about the trust they have in the FAITH Network and UAMS.

The Rev. Bryant Whitted of Wilson, a FAITH Network Ambassador who communicates regularly with many fellow pastors, says the UAMS logo on the posters gets the attention and respect of congregants, including his own. The COVID-19 guidance has also helped his and other churches safely enjoy worship services.

Dr. Bryant-Moore is using the network to disseminate potentially life-saving information to an audience that, notably, appears to be listening and acting on it.

Sincerely,

Laura James, M.D.
Director, TRI
Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical and Translational Research, UAMS

FAITH in Facts

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It includes guidance on how to safely conduct worship services and how to stay connected with the church community. Welcome signs as part of the toolkit ask visitors not to enter if they have any of the listed symptoms.

'A LOT OF RESPECT'

"The signs are laminated and easy to read, and that UAMS logo on there lets you know it's nothing we just made up," said Whitted, who also serves as a FAITH Network ambassador. "It gets a lot of attention and a lot of respect."

The toolkits are one part of a comprehensive FAITH Network research intervention to address COVID-19-related health disparities. In Arkansas, Blacks have nearly double the cases per 100,000 population as whites, and have nearly twice the rate of death, according to a July 30 assessment by the UAMS College of Public Health. While Latinx have had a significantly higher rate of coronavirus than both whites and Blacks, deaths have been about half that of whites.

"In addition to the health disparities related to COVID-19, some of the biggest hotspots have been in churches," said Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, who established the FAITH Network in 2016. "Some people are still going to worship with the belief that God will protect them or heal them, and they are still not taking precautions. As a result, more church members and church leaders are getting COVID-19, and some are dying."

LEVERAGING THE NETWORK

A 2013 graduate of the TRI KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Program and associate professor in the College of Public Health, Bryant-Moore began the FAITH Network with a focus on mental wellness. Today the network is addressing a host of health disparities by engaging and training Black, Latinx

and Marshallese faith leaders across the state as Research Advocates and FAITH Network Ambassadors.

Given its extensive engagement across the state, the network is in a unique position to help prevent COVID-19 in faith communities, Bryant-Moore said. The Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) agreed, recently awarding her a \$150,000 COVID-19-focused enhancement of an existing grant.

EXPANDING EFFORT

The FAITH Network produced 75 COVID-19 safety toolkits prior to receiving the PCORI award, and those were snapped up by churches across the state. Another 75 are being produced using the PCORI enhancement. The network also provided electronic versions to the state Department of Health, which has links to the files on its Faith-Based Outreach webpage.

The PCORI award will allow the FAITH Network to utilize its 28 Research Advocates and 10 Ambassadors to devise strategies that help minimize stress and build resilience related to COVID-19. Small group discussions are being held online with Latinx, Black and Marshallese faith community members. Their work will help identify communication strategies for additional COVID-19 toolkits for faith communities. A video will be produced about the faith community's response to the pandemic, showing best practices that can be used in future infectious disease outbreaks.

The FAITH Network also communicates best practices through webinars and with more than 700 people on its email listserv.

In September, Bryant-Moore will conduct a national webinar focusing on the faith community and COVID-19 in collaboration with the National Black Nurses Association.

Not Safe: COVID-19 Forces End to Parking Lot Services



Rev. Johnny Harris preaching from the back of his pickup truck.

The Rev. Johnny Harris of Gurdon found that keeping his congregants safe from COVID-19 requires vigilance. Until late July, he delivered his sermons in the church parking lot, standing in the back of his pickup. It seemed like a good way to social distance, and it was complemented with Facebook Live so congregants could watch from their cars or stay home. Then two congregants tested positive, so he ended the parking lot services.

"It's not safe because you don't know who doesn't have it," said Harris, who leads the Mt. Canaan Baptist Church. "Some people will get out of their cars, and if they don't look like they've got it, they might inadvertently shake hands or whatever."

He believes caution and the information toolkits from the FAITH Network will help.

"We don't want to put anybody else in danger," he said.

Connecting while Complying

TRI Hosts First UAMS Regulatory Compliance Conference



Quincy Byrdson, Ed.D.



Chris Trudeau, J.D.

UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital and Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System research communities are invited to attend the first UAMS TRI Regulatory Compliance Conference, Oct. 27-28, 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. (both mornings).

The online conference's theme is Connecting while Complying, designed to help researchers learn to better comply with regulatory requirements while also better connecting with research participants.

The keynote speaker is Quincy Byrdson, Ed.D., executive director of Research Administration at Wellstar

Research Institute. Dr. Byrdson is an award-winning author whose work has been featured in the Journal of Clinical Research Excellence and the Journal of Clinical Research Best Practices. He is a highly sought-after speaker who has shared his work at numerous research conferences across the country.

Chris Trudeau, J.D., director of TRI's Regulatory Knowledge & Support function, will lead the conference. It will include advice and training about disclosing foreign influence in research, a hot-button issue in the research world. Importantly, attendees will have an opportunity to ask questions of key UAMS compliance professionals during a 90-minute roundtable discussion on the first day.

Please mark your calendar for this important event. Stay tuned for registration details!

TRI Opens 5 Clinical Research Rooms



TRI's research coordinators are fired up about the new clinical research space. L-R, front: Anja Rassman, B.S.N., RN, and Shellah Rogers, B.S.N., RN, CMSRN; Back: Lisa Richardson, RN, Amanda Daniell, B.S., CRS, Kennetha Newman, CRS, CRA, Amanda Harwell, B.S.N., RN, Ashley Sides, CRS, CCRP, and Cindy Witkowski, B.S.N., RN.

TRI recently completed a major renovation of its clinical suite that added five private clinical research rooms. Located on the third floor of the Institute on Aging Building, the new clinical area can accommodate the broad range of clinical research being conducted at UAMS. It includes blood draw and height/weight stations, with individual rooms uniquely equipped based on study needs. For example, participants

can be scheduled to a room with an exam table, bed or recliner.

"We are very excited to have this renovated space," said Cindy Witkowski, B.S.N., RN, director of clinical trials. "Having appropriately equipped private clinical rooms will better serve our participants, our researchers and our clinical research coordinators."

TRI Study of the Month



UAMS PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Tina S. Ipe, M.D., M.P.H., Division Director, Transfusion Medicine; Associate Professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, College of Medicine.

SUMMARY: Arkansas Expanded Access COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma Treatment Program for patients with severe or life-threatening COVID-19 symptoms.

SIGNIFICANCE: Convalescent plasma from individuals who have recovered from COVID-19 is being studied as a potential therapeutic in others.

TRI SERVICES: Medicare coverage analysis, study budget development, IRB submission and regulatory startup, training for study staff/investigators, oversight of enrollment startup, and research nurse coordinator services.

Tina Ipe, M.D., M.P.H., is assisted on the study by TRI research coordinator Anja Rassman, B.S.N., RN.

NEW TRI Seminar Series!

All are invited to this new TRI-sponsored seminar series featuring TRI-funded researchers who will share their results. Each of the innOVATION seminars will feature several brief presentations. The event will be held via Zoom video conferencing. CME credit is available. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for details.



Seminar schedule:

- Wednesday, Sept. 9, 4:30 – 6 p.m., Opioid Researchers
- Thursday, Nov. 12, 4:30 – 6 p.m., TRI Pilots Awardees
- Tuesday, Jan. 12, 4 – 6 p.m., KL2 and T Awardees

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