

# THE TRIBUNE

JANUARY 2022

## Clinical Champions

### Implementation Science Scholar Graduates Praised, Challenged

Simple everyday things...



In their final act as the inaugural TRI Implementation Science Scholars Program cohort, five UAMS clinician scholars revealed their substantial progress implementing new approaches to improve health care.

The presentations at a December symposium received immediate positive feedback from the program's external evaluator, Jane Mahoney, M.D., director of the Dissemination & Implementation Launchpad at the University of Wisconsin Institute for Clinical and Translational Research.

"This really made my day, seeing these projects come to fruition and providing incredible benefits," Mahoney told the scholars and all those attending via Zoom. "This is a very novel program."

The two-year scholars program is a partnership between TRI and the Center for Implementation Research (CIR), led by Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., professor in the UAMS College of Pharmacy. Curran

*(Continued on page 2)*



2 ounces (60ml)

Blood volume of a 600 gm baby !



Megha Sharma, M.D., in her final presentation as an Implementation Science Program Scholar, illustrated how little blood neonates have available to give for tests.



Dear Colleagues,

In this issue of The TRiBune, we highlight the remarkable success of the first cohort to graduate from the Implementation Science Scholars Program.

The graduation in December is a milestone for the program, which Dr. Geoff Curran conceptualized only a few years ago. It was clear that Dr. Curran's vision and passion for implementation science would lead to great things. He jokes about building the plane as it was flying, but he and his able team got it done, helping this inaugural class implement strategies that are already impacting patient care practices and outcomes.

We are privileged to bring this kind of opportunity to UAMS faculty. The program has revealed a healthy pool of devoted

clinical champions with a talent for implementation science. It also illustrates how our Clinical and Translational Science Award provides vital resources that will support innovative new efforts to move the needle in health care. Based on our first two years, I believe this program will be a mainstay at UAMS, and it is already being used as a model at other institutions.

I commend our scholars, Dr. Curran and his core faculty team: Drs. Traci Abraham, Jure Baloh, Sara Landes, Taren Swindle, Benjamin Teeter and Jeremy Thomas, along with key support from Cindy Mosley, TRI program manager.

Sincerely,

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

## Clinical Champions (continued from page 1)



Curran

and his CIR team lead didactic sessions and provide close mentoring to the scholars.

Mahoney said the projects each share an essential strength that contributed to their success.

"The role of the clinical champion is key," she said. "A clinical champion is someone who gets the buy-in, who really understands how to use implementation science to drive the change."

She noted that each project also showed the need for multiple strategies, adapting them for a variety of settings, and using qualitative methods to understand them.

"I would love to see this group help lead the dissemination and scale-up of these changes nationally," she said. "For all the

work that you're doing to make the Arkansas health system better, that can benefit the whole country."

Curran thanked Mahoney for her weeks of diligent preparation and critiques, TRI for its funding and other support despite the program's novelty, and the scholars for their willingness to participate in the inaugural effort.

"I cannot imagine a more well-suited set of scholars to help us start this program," Curran said. "It was an extremely motivated and passionate group who was ready to dive in and get out of their comfort zone and learn lots of new skills."

The scholars, listed here with summaries of their projects, began work in January 2020 to address a range of health care gaps.



**Kapil Arya, M.D.**, *associate professor, Division of Pediatric Neurology, Department of Pediatrics*

Implemented a statewide process for screening Arkansas newborns with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a rare genetic condition that causes death and disability

if not caught in the first weeks of life. He also led establishment of a system to ensure expedited treatment before onset of the disease. The incidence of SMA is 7.8-10 per 100,000 live births. Since implementation in April 2020, about 40,000 blood samples were tested by December 2021, with two neonates diagnosed and treated for SMA.



**Johnathan Goree, M.D.**, *associate professor, Department of Anesthesiology; director, Chronic Pain Division*

Implemented a safe post-operative opioid prescribing protocol with implementation tailored to specific surgical units. The protocol now requires all UAMS surgeons to note in the

electronic health record their expected patient pain severity post-surgery, which prompts recommendations for opioid dosing. The comprehensive implementation program has reduced the duration of opioid prescriptions to fewer than five days on average, the project's goal. Elements of the implementation program have been adopted system-wide to support UAMS opioid prescribing goals. The goal also became a UAMS Medical Center priority as Goree worked on the project.



**Emily Kocurek, M.D.**, *assistant professor, Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine*

Implemented an ICU liberation bundle using a comprehensive package of implementation strategies, including new clinical protocols, clinical decision support tools, quality monitoring steps, training, team-building efforts, and identifying and preparing champions to help improve use of the protocols. The ICU liberation bundle includes care practices that are focused on patient recovery (e.g., treating pain, assessing delirium). The goal is to improve ICU care to reduce post-intensive care syndrome and increase survival. About 60% of ICU patients have some form of the syndrome, including cognitive impairment, depression, and disability. Based on her work to develop new clinical decision support tools, Kocurek now works with UAMS clinical informatics to develop these tools for other areas of the hospital.



**Debopam Samanta, M.D.**, *associate professor, Department of Pediatrics, medical director for Epilepsy, Clinical Neurophysiology Laboratory, and MEG Laboratory*

Established and implemented an interdisciplinary epilepsy clinic at Arkansas Children's to better evaluate patients with drug-resistant, intractable seizures to address the underutilization of evidence-based epilepsy interventions, including surgery. The clinic also uses new educational strategies and prompts for patients, families and referring physicians to ensure that more Arkansas children who are candidates for underused interventions are identified and evaluated. The clinic reviewed 76 patients in its first 11 months of operation, with 39 deemed suitable for further epilepsy surgery evaluation and 24 (31.6%) being considered for vagus nerve stimulation therapy.



**Megha Sharma, M.D.**, *assistant professor, Division of Neonatology, Department of Pediatrics*

Developed and implemented protocols and implementation strategies in the electronic medical record system and education/awareness strategies to reduce the amount of blood drawn from very low birthweight infants to help reduce medical complications. The implementation package also included prompts and signs on care staff computer monitors to promote awareness and mindfulness when blood tests are considered. Since implementation on Oct. 1, 2020, the total amount of blood drawn has decreased by 20% and the number of blood tests ordered has dropped by 15%.

# Pilot Applications Invited for Inter-institutional Pilot Awards



The **Consortium of Rural States** (CORES) research collaborative, which includes UAMS, recently released its inter-institutional pilot award Request for Applications (RFA), with up to \$25,000 available per award per participating institution.

All UAMS-affiliated faculty are invited to apply. Funding priority will be given to research that addresses issues of disparities either because of rurality or underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

**Letters of Intent and Draft Aims are due Feb. 14, 2022.  
The application deadline is March 14, 2022.**

The Inter-institutional Pilot Project Awards promote collaboration across the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) consortium by funding innovative, translational research projects that involve three or more of the six CTSA institutions that make up the CORES Research Collaborative.

In addition to UAMS, the collaborative includes the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, University of Kansas Medical Center, University of Kentucky, University of Iowa, and the University of Utah Health.

The RFA can be found at [TRI.uams.edu](http://TRI.uams.edu).

**Questions? Contact Chrissie Barnes, [CBarnes@uams.edu](mailto:CBarnes@uams.edu).**

## TRI Study of the Month



*Subodh Devabhaktuni, M.D., consults with TRI's Keith Bracy, lead regulatory specialist on the phase 3 clinical trial.*

- **UAMS Principal Investigator:** Subodh Devabhaktuni, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of Cardiology, Department of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine.
- **Summary:** A phase 3 multi-center efficacy and safety study of Etripamil Nasal Spray to treat spontaneous episodes of Paroxysmal Supraventricular Tachycardia (PSVT), an arrhythmia.
- **Significance:** While not lethal, PSVT episodes can cause panic that sends patients to the emergency department. If approved by the FDA, Etripamil Nasal Spray could be used in the home to stabilize patients' heart rhythms.
- **TRI Services:** Budget development and negotiation, Medicare coverage analysis, and regulatory management
- **Sponsor:** Milestone Pharmaceuticals Inc.

APPLY NOW

## TRI Invites Data Scholar Award Applications

TRI has released its 2022 Request for Applications (RFA) for its Data Scholar Awards funding opportunity. The Data Scholars Program is a one-year program for UAMS-affiliated faculty that combines training in data analytics with mentored support.

Applications are due March 1. Data Scholars will receive:

- 20% salary support (up to NIH annual salary cap: \$192,300 + fringe)
- Tuition support up to a maximum of \$2,500/semester and \$5,000/year for customized, didactic training. Scholars may enroll in course work as degree seeking or non-degree seeking
- Close mentoring from UAMS TRI faculty and staff in developing a research project in the Data Scholar's clinical area of interest using existing UAMS data resources

Find the RFA at [TRI.uams.edu](https://www.tri.uams.edu).

**Questions? Contact Chaz England, [CEngland@uams.edu](mailto:CEngland@uams.edu).**

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