

# THE TRIBUNE

AUGUST 2023

## Community-Driven Research

### TRI Training, Support Helps Investigators Secure PCORI Funding



Members of the research team are (clockwise from top): April Bachrodt, Melissa Zielinski, Marley Fradley, Katy Allison, Sophia Dugwyler, and Mollee Steely Smith

A UAMS academic-community partnership to address health disparities among women involved in the justice system has been funded by a \$250,000 award from the national Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). Melissa Zielinski, Ph.D., and members of her UAMS study team say the successful PCORI application is a credit to the knowledge they gained as participants in the Translational Research Institute's (TRI) Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Scholars Program and from other TRI services.

"TRI has phenomenal community engagement resources that have informed this project," said Zielinski, an associate professor and director of the Health and the Legal System (HEALS) Lab in the College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences. "In community-based research it is vital to have people at the table who are affected by the issues you're studying, and TRI taught us how to make that happen."

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Dear Colleagues,

In this month's issue of *The TRIBUNE*, we share the story of a newly funded UAMS academic-community partnership that was made possible by our Community-Based Participatory Research Scholars Program (CBPR).

A UAMS research group led by Melissa Zielinski, Ph.D., leveraged its CBPR training to secure funding from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute. The award is allowing the UAMS researchers and their community partners to begin to address health disparities experienced by women involved in the justice system.

The team's ability to secure the award is a testament to the vital knowledge that researchers gain through the unique CBPR program. Their success should also be a powerful motivator for all UAMS-affiliated researchers to embrace community-engaged research.

Congratulations to the researchers and community partners involved. Their efforts are admirable; women involved in the justice system experience some of the most extreme health disparities.

I hope that this success story will inspire more researchers to take advantage of the resources and opportunities for community-engaged research available through TRI.

I am also proud of the innovative work by our leaders in the Community Engagement Program, Tiffany Haynes, Ph.D., director, and Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, associate director. They are positively impacting Arkansans' lives by helping UAMS build capacity in community-engaged research.

Let's continue breaking barriers and empowering our communities.

Sincerely,

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

## Community-Driven Research (continued from page 1)

The two-year Eugene Washington Community Engagement Award will enable the team to establish a women's justice-health alliance of individuals and organizations that is prepared to conduct patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR).

April Bachrodt, Ph.D., LCSW, at Magdalene Serenity House in Fayetteville, which serves women who have experienced trauma, addiction and incarceration, is the PCORI project's lead community partner.

"We're not just assuming we know the questions or we know the priorities," Bachrodt said. "We are bringing these stakeholders to the table and that is going to have the biggest impact for our future work."

Other project team members are:

- Mary "Katy" Allison, Ph.D., MPH, CHES, research assistant professor in the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health Department of Health Behavior & Health Education. She is also a TRI KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Program scholar.
- Sophia Dugwyler, a certified peer recovery specialist who has experienced addiction, incarceration and recovery.
- Marley Fradley, a research assistant in the HEALS Lab.
- Mollee Steely Smith, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in Zielinski's HEALS lab. She is supported by a National Institute on Drug Abuse T32 training grant.

## Significant Health Disparities

Women entangled in the justice system experience complex, chronic physical and mental health conditions that are exacerbated by incarceration and often go unaddressed after they are released. They encounter numerous challenges beyond the social implications of separation from their families and stigmatization. The incarceration of women leads to significant health disparities, both physical and mental, compounding their existing marginalization. Over 57% of incarcerated women experience physical health problems, including arthritis, asthma, hypertension, hepatitis, dental issues, speech impairments, hearing loss, visual impairment and mobility constraints.

In addition, 64-81% of incarcerated women meet criteria for at least one lifetime mental illness, with 46-70% meeting criteria for at least one current mental illness. Trauma-associated mental illnesses are prevalent, with rates 2-10 times higher than those in the general community. The mental health challenges are linked to post-release overdose and death, highlighting the urgency for addressing these issues.

Incarcerated women also face specific gender-specific needs, including pregnancy and postpartum care, which are often inadequately addressed in prisons and jails. About 4% of incarcerated women are pregnant.

## Community Voices

Dugwyler noted that there are disparities in health and treatment services to help such women depending on where they live. Rural women have less access to services, and the quality varies statewide. "That's

something that we really wanted to focus on was making sure that the whole state was able to get involved in the conversation and see what's working for justice-involved women," Dugwyler said. The term justice-involved women is used by the team to avoid stigmatizing labels.

The team is establishing a women's justice-health alliance of stakeholders in Arkansas that will determine future research priorities.

"Part of our learning experience in TRI's CBPR Scholars Program recognized not just the value of doing community-based research but having our research be driven by the needs of the community and

driven by the voices of the community," Allison said. "That certainly has been an approach that Dr. Zielinski and I would love to be part of all of our research moving forward, and that's really where we got this idea for this PCORI award."



*Tiffany Haynes*



*Keneshia Bryant-Moore*

The CBPR Scholars Program is run by TRI's Community Engagement team, which is led by Tiffany Haynes, Ph.D., director, and Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, associate-director.

Learn more about the CBPR program at [TRI.uams.edu](http://TRI.uams.edu).

## Two Postdocs Selected for Entrepreneurship Program

The Translational Research Institute Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HSIE) Postdoctoral Training Program has named two postdoctoral scholars for its class of 2023. The scholars, selected in a competitive application process, will receive two years of mentored entrepreneurship training.

The HSIE postdoctoral trainees, their research goals and mentors are:



**Henry A. Palfrey**, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral fellow in the College of Pharmacy Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. His research goal is to conduct studies to screen a library of compounds and determine the ability of novel epoxy lipid drugs to provide

protection against radiation-induced kidney and cardiovascular injury

Mentor: John D. Imig, Ph.D., professor and chair, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; and vice president for therapeutics at BioVentures LLC.



**Ashley Pike**, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the Brain Imaging Research Center of the Psychiatric Research Institute (PRI). Her primary research goal is to implement advanced neuroimaging techniques for clinical problem solving in multiple sclerosis (MS).

Mentor: Tatiana Wolfe, Ph.D., assistant professor, medical imaging physicist, PRI, College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry

The HSIE program is a partnership between TRI and the Entrepreneurship Graduate Program in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. The program aims to broaden the scholars' vision of using entrepreneurship principles and team science to accelerate biomedical discoveries into improved health outcomes.

## TRI Study of the Month

**UAMS Principal Investigator:** Laura Hays, Ph.D., APRN, CPNP-PC, FAHA, assistant professor, College of Nursing

**Summary:** "Arkansas – Making History," is a pilot study at the UAMS North Central Family Medical Center in Batesville. It is implementing a family health history tool called MeTree and integrating it with the Arkansas Department of Health's AR SHARE network, a statewide health information exchange that makes medical history information available to more than 2,500 medical practices across the state.

**Significance:** Arkansas is ranked among the states with the highest prevalence of multiple genetically-influenced chronic conditions, so implementation of the program statewide could have significant implications for the improved health and wellness of Arkansans, and if successful, it could be implemented nationwide. Making History," is a pilot study at the UAMS North Central Family Medical Center in Batesville. It is implementing nationwide.

**TRI Services:** Research coordinator support through the TRI-supported UAMS Rural Research Network.

**Sponsor:** TRI Pilot Award Program



Ashley Stone, B.S. (left), a TRI research coordinator for the Rural Research Network, is assisting on the study led by Laura Hays, Ph.D., APRN, with Jordan Weaver, M.D., medical director of the UAMS North Central Family Medical Center in Batesville.





## Advancing Arkansas Lifespan Research Conference

*Charting a Path to Lifelong Health and Resilience*

All are invited to the free two-day Advancing Arkansas Lifespan Research Conference: Charting a Path to Lifelong Health and Resilience, Sept. 13 and 14. The conference aims to advance life-course research in Arkansas by sharing inspiring avenues of investigation and facilitating new collaborations.

The conference will be from noon to 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 13, and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 14, at the Robinson Center, 426 W. Markham St., Little Rock.

### Register Here Today!

Life course research is advocated by the NIH and its National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences to strategically promote health and combat diseases as they progress across the lifespan. The conference will emphasize collaboration between UAMS, Arkansas Children's Research Institute and other institutions, underscored by a new team science / lifespan research grant opportunity.

Scan  
here



### THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND THEIR PRESENTATION TITLES ARE:



**Rosalind Wright**, M.D., M.P.H., dean for Translational Biomedical Research and professor of Pediatrics, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai  
"Life Course Science of Health Disparities: Opportunities to Build Resilience and Mitigate Risk"



**Amanda Dettmer**, Ph.D., research scientist, Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine  
"Rhesus Monkeys: Comparative, Causal, and Complementary Models of Lifespan Health"



**Fred Prior**, Ph.D., distinguished professor and chair, College of Medicine Department of Biomedical Informatics, UAMS "ARLife: Integrating Healthcare Information Across the Lifespan"

**CME credit available.**  
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**for more information.**