

THE TRIBUNE

January 2025

A Pioneer in Implementation Science How Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., Forged a National Hub at UAMS



Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., discusses implementation science opportunities with attendees of the 2024 TRI Research Expo. (Photo by Bryan Clifton)

In biomedical research, some leaders not only advance their field but also build communities around it. Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., is one such leader. Since joining UAMS in 1999, his name has become synonymous with implementation science, not just within Arkansas, but across the globe.

Curran's journey into implementation science began at the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS), which in 1998 launched a program focusing on implementation of mental health guidelines, part of a new nationwide program at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"It was very proactive and intervention-focused, and I was excited about it because it aligned with my training in sociology," said Curran, whose doctorate is in that field.

The experience laid the groundwork for his leadership at the UAMS Center for Implementation Research (CIR) and TRI's

Continued on page 2



Dear Colleagues,

This month, I am thrilled to spotlight one of our most esteemed colleagues, Dr. Geoffrey Curran, whose contributions to UAMS and the field of implementation science are truly transformative.

Dr. Curran directs the UAMS Center for Implementation Research (CIR), and his leadership has placed UAMS on the map as a center of excellence for implementation science. His groundbreaking work, including his highly cited "hybrid studies" paper, has greatly influenced how researchers worldwide integrate effectiveness studies with implementation research.

The CIR has become a vibrant hub, drawing researchers from UAMS' colleges and beyond, fostering an environment of innovation and shared purpose. Since partnering with TRI, the CIR has supported the submission of over 50 research grants, with close to half funded, totaling over \$55 million.

Equally important is Dr. Curran's leadership of TRI's

Implementation Science Scholar Program. This program equips frontline clinicians with the tools to translate evidence-based practices into real-world settings, improving patient care across Arkansas. Dr. Curran is also directing a new NCATS-funded translational research program which will use implementation science principles and methods to reduce inequity in the delivery and receipt of multiple evidence-based practices at UAMS.

As a community builder, a mentor and a champion for his team, Dr. Curran exemplifies our values and amplifies the impact of our translational science efforts.

Please join me in celebrating Dr. Curran's outstanding contributions to UAMS and implementation science.

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

A Pioneer in Implementation Science (continued from page 1)

Implementation Science Scholar Program, where he has fostered a thriving environment for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Shaping the Field

Curran's contributions are far-reaching, extending beyond UAMS and impacting how implementation science is understood and practiced across the U.S. and beyond.

He recently represented UAMS at the annual Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) meeting hosted by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). Presenting on behalf of TRI, Curran was among just five CTSA representatives from the 60-plus member consortium invited to discuss innovative projects. TRI's project, led by Curran, will use implementation science to address disparities in the delivery of evidence-based practices, particularly regarding racial inequities in health care. The project will do a "deep dive" into existing patient journey patterns, where local "equity audits" have shown that some patient groups have not received the same subspecialty referrals or treatments as other patients. Working with service providers and patient representatives, the project will ultimately test new approaches to reduce inequities in referral and service use patterns.

In a November 2024 publication about building capacity in dissemination and implementation research, Curran was listed as the fourth-ranked expert for "grant advice" and "career advice" in the field based on a survey of 482 researchers in the U.S. and Canada. He ranked sixth for "all advice types" and "research advice."

Curran's groundbreaking 2012 "hybrid" studies paper, which came from his work at CAVHS, revolutionized how researchers merge clinical effectiveness studies with implementation research.

Sara Landes, Ph.D., associate director of the CIR and a key member of Curran's team, said the paper was deeply influential, steering her from the VA Palo Alto Health Care System in Palo Alto, Calif., to UAMS and CAVHS in 2015.

"When I read it, I was blown away, and it's become a landmark concept," said Landes, an associate professor in the Department of Veterans Affairs' Behavioral Health Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Program. Curran's paper has become one of the most cited papers in the field (over 3,400 times).

Curran's unique ability to help researchers communicate complex concepts has also been transformative for the field.

"His practice of referring to 'the thing' you're implementing helps break down barriers across disciplines and allows researchers to work towards a common goal," Landes said. He wrote about this approach in another signature article, "Implementation Science Made Too Simple: A Teaching Tool." It has been cited 125 times in four years.

Implementation in Action: Impacting Arkansas

Under Curran's leadership, TRI's Implementation Science Scholar Program has equipped 19 clinicians with the skills to improve practice at their local level, directly impacting patient care in Arkansas.

"The program is relatively novel because it focuses on frontline clinicians, not researchers," Curran said. He and Landes say seeing motivated clinicians learn new skills, deploy strategies and measure their impact is deeply gratifying.

"It's amazing to see our work translate directly into improved care for patients in our system," he said.

Cultivating a Collaborative Ecosystem

Curran's vision extends beyond publications and grants; he has cultivated a vibrant interdisciplinary community at UAMS.

"We have researchers who drive down from Fayetteville to attend our events because they value that collaborative spirit," Landes said. "It's not about him; it's about building expertise and fostering growth across the field."

Beyond his professional achievements, Curran cultivates a sense of belonging within the UAMS community, which Landes has experienced personally.

As she drove from California to Little Rock in 2015, Landes tried unsuccessfully to follow a game involving her favorite baseball team - the Chicago Cubs. To her delight, Curran had an eye on the game and kept her updated via texts.

"I knew then I was coming to the right place to work with the right person," Landes said.



Curran expressed gratitude after being named in 2022 as Endowed Chair in Pharmacy Practice Innovation in the College of Pharmacy.



RESEARCH DAY!

Register Now for TRI Research Day 2025, April 10-11

We're thrilled to invite all UAMS-affiliated faculty and staff to join us for two inspiring days celebrating innovation in translational research!

Location: Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute Conference Center, 10th floor.

This year's expanded TRI Research Day will feature:

- Dynamic keynote speakers
- Oral presentations from TRI-supported investigators
- A poster session highlighting research from TRI's funding and training programs
- Community-engaged programming
- Great opportunities for networking!

Meet Our Keynote Speakers

- **Elizabeth A. Shenkman, Ph.D.**
Co-Director, University of Florida Clinical and Translational Science Institute; Chair, Department of Health Outcomes and Biomedical Informatics.
- **Sharla Smith, Ph.D., MPH**
Associate Professor, Population Health, University of Kansas Medical Center, Founder of Kansas Birth Equity Network.

Please use the QR code to register.

Contact: Christi Madden,
cmadden2@uams.edu.



TRI Study of the Month

UAMS Principal Investigator: John Arthur, M.D., Ph.D., professor and chief, Division of Nephrology, UAMS College of Medicine Department of Internal Medicine.

Summary: A multicenter clinical trial testing various interventions for treating symptoms related to damage to the autonomic nervous system associated with Long COVID-19. Subjects in this study are experiencing increases in heart rate with standing and other debilitating symptoms. The study is testing two drugs - ivabradine and gamunex-C (also known as IVIG), both approved by the Food and Drug Administration for other uses. The study is also testing a coordinated non-drug care intervention and usual non-drug care.

Significance: The study may identify a treatment or treatments that will help people with Long COVID live with fewer symptoms, and it may help researchers better understand the condition and how to treat it.

TRI Services: Medicare coverage analysis, study budget development, regulatory and nurse/clinical coordinator support, administration of Clinical Trial Management System, and post-award financial management.

Sponsor/Funder: Duke Clinical Research Institute/ National Institutes of Health.



John Arthur, M.D., Ph.D., with TRI's Rory McCoy, B.S.N., RN, CRS, the study's lead research coordinator.

TRI Launches Clinical Trials Seminar Series

The Translational Research Institute (TRI) is thrilled to announce the launch of its monthly Clinical Trials Learning Collaborative Seminar Series.

This new series is designed to expand UAMS' community of clinical trialists, featuring state-of-the-art approaches and insights in clinical trials research. In addition to benefiting patients, clinical trials create career development opportunities and strengthen UAMS' reputation for innovation.

Erika Petersen, M.D., kicked off the series on January 28 with the presentation "Clinical Trials: Enhancing Health While Creating Opportunities for Networking and Career Development."

Please register using the QR code for upcoming seminars throughout 2025. Below are the speakers and topics for each month:



Tuhin Virmani, M.D., Ph.D.,
"Implementation of Investigator
Initiated Trials: Lessons Learned,"
Feb. 25



Song Ounpraseuth, Ph.D., "What's
New in Study Design?" **March 18**
"Avoiding Pitfalls in Clinical Trials
(Bias; Generalizability)," **Nov. 25**



Jaime Baldner, B.S., CCDM
"Collecting Data for Clinical Trial
Research Using Electronic Data
Capture Systems," **April 22**



Laura Adkins, MAP, CCRP, CCRA,
CRS, AdvCRS, "IND & IDE - Knowing
When You Need Help," **May 27**



Rhonda Kost, M.D., "The
Clinical Research Experience -
Rockefeller CTSA," **June 24**



Fred Prior, Ph.D., "Best Practices for
Data Capture in Remote Settings,"
July 22



Faculty panel: Rohit Dhall, M.D., Nishank Jain,
M.D., Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D., and Pam Christie
(facilitator), "Strategies for Successful Research
Participant Recruitment: Faculty Perspectives"
Aug. 26



Reid Landes, Ph.D., "Developing a
Good Study Question," **Sept. 23**



Melissa Zielinski, Ph.D., "Special
Consideration for Criminal Justice
Populations," **Oct. 28**



Ruofei Du, Ph.D., "The Pilot Study: Defining
Purpose, Scope, and Approaches," **Dec. 9**



Please register using the QR code.

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or Tuhin Virmani, M.D., Ph.D., TVirmani@uams.edu