

Network news

The word “research” used to produce mental images of hermit-like scientists going it alone, jealously guarding their discoveries. But the days of the rugged individualist are fading fast. With prodding from the National Institutes of Health, researchers and their institutions are sharing their work through partnerships and networks — in a continuing effort to translate discoveries more quickly into healthier communities.

The College of Medicine, whose entire approach to medical education is based on clinical partnerships, made headlines this fall with the latest chapter of its longtime research relationship with the University of Florida. FSU is a partner in the \$17.5 million award that UF received through the NIH’s Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program.

“It’s a significant milestone for both institutions,” said Michael Muszynski, associate dean for clinical research. “It further codifies the functionality of our Clinical Research Network involving all of our statewide regional and rural campuses, and it carries the enormous potential of two major Florida universities working together to bring the latest medical advances to a very expansive and diverse patient demographic.”

The CTSA supports a nationwide network of about 60 hubs. Myra Hurt, senior associate dean for research and graduate programs, estimated the College of Medicine’s share of the four-year award will be more than doubled by institutional support and will total several million dollars.

Not sure what “translational science” means? Hurt offered this example: “We did a pre-test on student athletes testing their reasoning ability. So later, if they get a head injury we have a baseline of ‘Are they reasoning in the same way?’ This would help diagnose minor concussions that may go unnoticed. It’s a simple change that’s translating research about the athletic physical into prevention and treatment of concussions.”

Hurt mentioned blood pressure as another common health issue that could be addressed in this latest round of translational research.

“We have about 2,500 community physicians on our clerkship faculty, and they collectively have more than 2 million patients, representing a demographic cross-section of Florida’s population,” she said. “That’s where our students do their clinical training, and that’s where we’re building research.”

College of Medicine research projects often involve overlapping partnerships with UF and the OneFlorida Clinical Research Consortium.

“Another grant that we recently received with UF, and the University of Miami, is from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, or PCORI,” Hurt said. “It will create a database linking de-identified information about human disease all over Florida. The goal is to create an archive of such data linked all over the United States. That will greatly enhance our ability to understand chronic diseases and conditions of the brain that have been very hard to treat.”



Nurse Practitioner Susan LaJoie, left, works with a diverse patient population in Gadsden County.



Juliette Lomax-Homier

Fort Pierce’s new leader

Juliette Lomax-Homier, onetime partner in a health-care group called Just Ladies, is the newest member of a deans’ group that previously was just gentlemen.

In June, Lomax-Homier became dean of the Fort Pierce Regional Campus. Each of the College of Medicine’s six regional campuses has a dean, and she’s the first woman in that role. Lomax-Homier is no beginner, though: She’s been with the Fort Pierce campus since 2007.

“She is a superb role model and educator who has served as both OB-GYN clerkship director from the beginning and as our OB-GYN education director for the past year,” College of Medicine Dean John P. Fogarty said. “Her leadership and calm presence in these roles has made her selection as campus dean very easy.”

Lomax-Homier replaced the founding campus dean, Randall Bertollette, who continues to serve as a part-time course director for Doctoring 3.

“When I came to Fort Pierce to complete a National Public Health Service Corps obligation just out of residency,” she said, “I could have never dreamed that the same community would one day host a regional campus of a medical school.”

Lomax-Homier’s background aligns perfectly with the College of Medicine’s emphasis on primary care and service. From 1985 to 1989, she served the NHSC as a staff obstetrician-gynecologist for Fort Pierce’s underserved and migrant population. After that, she practiced OB-GYN at Just Ladies. Her practice now is limited to gynecology.

Fogarty lauded Bertollette’s work as the first dean of the Fort Pierce campus, and students, alumni, faculty and other community members praised him as kind, supportive, humorous and welcoming.

“I only hope,” Lomax-Homier said, “that I can fill the shoes of Dr. Bertollette.”