

FSU's medical school shares \$17.5 m grant with UF



Byron Dobson, Democrat senior writer 2:57 p.m. EDT September 30, 2015



(Photo: COLIN HACKLEY)

With a network of 2,500 physicians providing hands-on medical training for its students across the state, Florida State University's College of Medicine is in a perfect position to identify health threats facing Floridians.

Those physicians, identified as "clerkship faculty," collectively treat more than 2 million patients, giving them first-hand experience with identifying those suffering from chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis.

That's why Myra Hurt, professor and senior associate dean for research and graduate programs at the College of Medicine, sees the benefit of FSU's partnership in the University of Florida's \$17.5 million award from the

National Institutes of Health's Clinical and Translational Science program.

The goal is to improve overall health-care treatment by helping UF's Clinical and Translational Science Institute and its partners to translate medical research more quickly to benefit patients.

Hurt defined translational science as the practice of taking discoveries about human disease and turning them into treatments or information that will prevent disease.

With its resources, Florida State is in a position to identify pressing health concerns, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and coordinate that information with researchers at UF and within the College of Medicine's research discipline.



Myra Hurt is a professor and senior associate dean for research and graduate programs at the FSU COM. (Photo: Byron Dobson/Democrat)

"We are ideally situated to do community-based research," said Hurt, who served as acting dean of the new College of Medicine from 2000 to 2001. "We built a different model of education. We have our students out with doctors all over the state seeing medicine practiced as it is today.

"Almost all medicine is practiced outside the hospital. One in 1,000 who get sick end up at academic health centers like Shands. Most research happens in ivory towers, but the patients are outside. The patients that bring you answers are out in the community."

While the bulk of the money will go to the University of Florida, the FSU College of Medicine expects to receive several million dollars from the grant and from matching funds from the university's vice president for research and the medical school's dean to finance its portion of the project.

The \$17.5 million award, spread over four years, is significant in that it highlights the importance of institutions sharing in collaborative research to identify ways to promote wellness and early prevention.

Rather than limiting critical medical research to well-known institutions such as UF Health Shands Hospital, FSU's roster of physicians and researchers and its network of campuses also can provide insight into what those physicians are seeing regularly in their practices.

The partnership also allows both universities to address the concern expressed by the National Institutes of Health that more research needs to be conducted with a diverse array of patients.

"Our partnership with the University of Florida in this award is a significant milestone for both institutions," Michael Muszynski, associate dean for clinical research, said in a release. "For the FSU College of Medicine, it further codifies the functionality of our Clinical Research Network involving all of our statewide regional and rural campuses."

Hurt noted that FSU's College of Medicine has six campuses around the state, plus rural centers in Immokalee and in Marianna. There are medical research coordinators in Orlando and Tallahassee, with a goal of getting coordinators at all six sites, she said, "to engage in research with those doctors and their patients."

"We know high blood pressure is one of the biggest killers," she said. "You have to get out and see how that develops, from birth to death. It is more likely to happen in this person than that person. The whole point is to build a network of information about patients nationwide through data."

The University of Florida became the state's first recipient of a Clinical and Translational Science Award in 2009 and is one of two awardees in the state. The University of Miami received an award in 2012.

"Renewed CTSA funding allows us to galvanize new teams and opportunities to accelerate the translation of research into improved patient care at UF Health and statewide," Dr. David Nelson, assistant vice president for research at UF and director of its Clinical and Translational Science Institute, said in a UF Health release.

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