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Three Florida universities win award to establish health network



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FSU, UF and University of Miami get federal grant to create large network of patient data.

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Three Florida universities have won a federal grant to create a network of patient data and help advance and speed up medical research.

University of Florida, University of Miami and Florida State University, which has a satellite campus in Orlando, received the \$7.9 million grant under the **Patient-Centered Outcomes Research** program.

The programs, who are rivals in sports, decided that by joining forces together they had better chances of winning large national grants.

"It is a big deal, because universities like Harvard and Chicago have gotten these grants based on academic history," said Dr. Michael Muszynski, associate dean for clinical research at FSU and regional campus dean in Orlando. "We were able to show that we have the academic ability to pull this off. We expanded coverage to include just about every demographic in the state."

The grant comes from a pot of money under the Affordable Care Act, which aims to create networks of de-identified patient medical records across the states in one large database, which can then be used as a rich source of health and medical research.

The dollars from the grant are specifically used for hiring IT professional to establish the network.

"Big data is the goal of PCOR to one day create a nationwide linkage of all these databases," said Muszynski.

This is yet another step in moving away from the traditional method of research, which has been done in academic medical centers over a long period of time, and expanding it to the community level to include a larger and more diverse sample size.

For example, on its part, FSU's partners at the community level include Orlando Health, Florida Hospital and community health centers in Central Florida.

"It brings new advances in medicine more rapidly to the consumer through the big data," Muszynski said of the networks. "For example, it'll take a very long time to compare low-dose and high-dose aspirin. Just to use academic medical centers in an old-fashioned way, would take years. PCOR promises to shorten that."

Among the three universities, the network will eventually bring together data from 9 million patients.

FSU is also a partner with UF in the \$17.5 million Clinical and Translational Science Award program, which aims to speed up advancements in research by providing funds to hire scientists.

"The average time for drug discovery is 11 to 12 years," said Muszynski. "And we're trying to cut that in half. Grants like this allow us to expand our network and add more manpower and enroll patients for these trials."

The three universities are part of [OneFlorida Clinical Research Consortium](#).
