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Health Sciences South Carolina Appoints New Chief Medical Officer

One of the nation's top physicians is coming to SC to help improve state's health care quality, keep HSSC at the forefront of health research and innovation.

Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC), the statewide collaborative of hospitals and research universities working to improve health, health research, and health care, has selected a new chief medical officer. After an extensive nationwide search, HSSC has recruited Dr. Christine Turley, of the University of Texas.

Turley will provide clinical leadership to HSSC, working closely with HSSC President and CEO Dr. Jay Moskowitz, and will have a faculty appointment at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine-Columbia. She will help ensure HSSC remains an innovator in the field of health research, will help increase clinical trials in the state, and will work to improve the quality and affordability of health care in South Carolina. In addition, she will work closely with HSSC's member hospitals and universities to increase collaboration and advance new health care initiatives.

Turley was chosen as CMO because of her background and her enthusiasm for the challenges of HSSC's work, according to Moskowitz. She was selected after a search that began with well over 1,000 applicants. Turley currently holds two positions at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB): vice chair for clinical services in the Department of Pediatrics, and Q.T. Box, M.D. Endowed Professor.

"The opportunity with HSSC is truly unique and too intriguing to refuse," Turley says about her decision to come to South Carolina. "It combines clinical research, health care, and health system improvement, and ultimately the ability to influence the health of many individuals. The collaborative nature of HSSC's members—the fact that South Carolina is a state where hospitals and research universities are working together to improve health care—is extremely rare and truly remarkable. I am excited to work with the visionary leaders at HSSC."

Turley also notes that she is eager to use the information management tools HSSC is developing, such as the Clinical Data Warehouse. She plans to use these tools to help address some of the most challenging problems confronting South Carolina and the country as a whole, such as obesity and health disparities.

“Through HSSC’s efforts, we now have the opportunity to leverage data and the desire to use that data to improve the health of all South Carolinians. I hope to use the information available through the HSSC network to focus on the quality of health care and improving the value of the care received by patients.”

“Dr. Turley was a clear choice to serve as our chief medical officer because of all that she brings to help us fulfill HSSC’s mission. She is driven, excited, personable, highly dedicated, and exceptionally patient-centered. She has the exact skills we need and a passion for the work we are doing to fuel innovation and collaboration in health care,” Moskowitz says.

Turley’s experience makes her uniquely qualified to help lead HSSC, Moskowitz adds. She has in-depth knowledge of health systems and system improvement as well as clinical research. She has worked in both academic and non-academic settings, rural and urban. Her experiences emphasize the connection of health and research, which Moskowitz believes will be invaluable in her new role.

One specific area in which Turley’s background makes her a good fit is clinical trials. A growing focus for HSSC is increasing the number of clinical trials in South Carolina to provide patients more treatment options. Turley has been involved in clinical trials of vaccines for more than a decade and has worked with a wide variety of agents including smallpox, avian influenza, cytomegalovirus, influenza and many others.

In addition to serving as vice chair for clinical services in the Pediatrics Department, Turley has served as director of the UTMB Office of Pediatric Clinical Trials, as associate director for clinical trials and clinical research at the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development, and is currently the Primary Investigator for several NIH-sponsored vaccine clinical trials. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of South Florida and her M.D. from the University of Miami School of Medicine, where she also completed her residency in pediatrics. She has completed an advanced training program on the protection of human research participants and is board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics. She also has served as medical director at several clinics in both urban and rural settings. She is widely published and received special recognition in 2010 in honor of extraordinary work in H1N1 influenza research, awarded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health. From 2007 to 2011, Turley has been elected by her peers for inclusion in Best Doctors in America®.

Along with her new position at HSSC, Turley also will serve as professor of clinical pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine-Columbia and serve as Office of the Dean advisor for USC School of Medicine-Columbia Clinical Affairs. “Dr. Turley has extensive clinical, teaching, research, and administrative experience and will bring all of those experiences to her role in the School of Medicine. She will be a tremendous asset to many of our programs and will be a wonderful mentor for our students and faculty,” says Richard Hoppmann, M.D., Dean of the USC School of Medicine.

About Health Sciences South Carolina

Established in April 2004, Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC) is a statewide public-private collaborative of research-intensive universities and major health systems possessing the shared vision of using health sciences research to improve the health, health care and economic wellbeing of South Carolina. HSSC includes Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina, Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center, Palmetto Health, Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, McLeod Health, Self Regional Healthcare and AnMed Health.