



For Immediate Release

With AAMC Award, Health Sciences South Carolina Becomes A Learning Health System for the Nation

COLUMBIA, S.C., January 8, 2015 - - The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has named [Health Sciences South Carolina](#) (HSSC) a recipient of the 2014 [AAMC Learning Health System Champion Research Award](#). HSSC is one of just eight institutions to win the prestigious award. The University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Columbia is a key collaborator with HSSC in the award.

HSSC, a “first in the nation” statewide biomedical research collaborative composed of seven health systems, plus three research-intensive universities and medical schools, received an outstanding score from the [AAMC](#) review committee for its efforts to bridge research, clinical care, and education through the establishment of the South Carolina Learning Health System with the goal of improving the health of all South Carolinians. This was achieved through the creation of a groundbreaking data-sharing agreement between HSSC’s diverse member organizations along with the establishment of statewide research infrastructure and sophisticated clinical data resources.

Since its inception in 2004, HSSC’s vision has been to improve the health status of South Carolinians through collaborative research and health system improvement activity conducted by its [members](#) which include Clemson University, Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and University of South Carolina (USC) and its medical schools in Columbia and Greenville, along with AnMed Health, Greenville Health System, MUSC Health, McLeod Health, Palmetto Health, Self Regional Healthcare, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System. Funded in large part by [The Duke Endowment](#), HSSC is an infrastructure hub in the creation of the statewide Learning Health System.

The [Learning Health System](#) is a concept advanced by the Institute of Medicine, in which healthcare systems use and convert healthcare data and evidence-based discoveries and technologies into clinical practice to promote overall improved health. In working to achieve the goal of a statewide Learning Health System, HSSC, with its members, has formed the foundation for this statewide system through innovative research tools that foster statewide engagement of multiple partners in research and quality improvement.

Commenting on the magnitude of the AAMC award, HSSC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Christine Turley said, “South Carolina truly is unique in that through HSSC, we have overcome traditional rivalries and competitive challenges to create a single entity focused on improving healthcare quality in our state. Through the creation of a Learning Health System, we are working to improve our state’s health status through a unique combination of university and healthcare leaders working as innovative problem solvers with a shared mission.”

Turley, who is also a professor at the USC School of Medicine Columbia as well as a practicing pediatrician at Palmetto Health, added, “While it sounds like a commonsense approach to improving healthcare, the combination of health systems and academic centers working together in this way is unique and puts South Carolina forward as a national leader.”

The AAMC award makes HSSC a national model for the development of learning health systems. The award provides for HSSC to serve as a mentor to other medical schools, health systems, and organizations across the country for one year. In February, Dr. Turley will travel to Washington D.C. to present South Carolina’s Learning Health System and meet potential “mentees.”

HSSC Wins AAMC Award

Add-1

An integral component of the South Carolina Learning Health System is HSSC's Clinical Data Warehouse that captures data from more than 3.8 million patients from HSSC-affiliated health systems. The multi-institutional Clinical Data Warehouse integrates the data into a structured, multi-use format that gives researchers and clinicians the ability to significantly impact chronic disease in South Carolina in areas such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. Another HSSC research infrastructure component is an electronic Institutional Review Board (eIRB), a resource that affords cooperative review for research projects and increases statewide collaboration.

HSSC and its member organizations have a number of research and quality improvement projects underway using these tools that could potentially transform how patients with specific diseases are treated, including patients with stroke, pneumonia, heart failure or with severe brain injury, among others. The value of the Learning Health System is that it allows diseases to be studied and improvements to be adopted, and then to further study the outcomes of patients as these changes are made, in an effort to continuously improve care. One crucial feature of the South Carolina Learning Health System is that it enables researchers and clinicians the ability to study multiple conditions or diseases across the lifespan, and prioritizes improving patient outcomes as a key objective.

"The Learning Health System is helping us advance a culture among South Carolina healthcare providers that values data-driven approaches to elevate healthcare quality, while decreasing costs and improving efficiency across our healthcare delivery system," explained HSSC Interim President and CEO Todd Thornburg. "The AAMC award will enable other states to emulate the leading role South Carolina has taken."

Other 2014 AAMC Learning Health System Research Award Winners include the University of Florida, Weill Cornell Medical College, University of Wisconsin Health/University of Wisconsin, Henry Ford Health System, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center (University of Connecticut), University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Duke University Medical Center.

About Health Sciences South Carolina

Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC) was established in 2004 as the nation's first biomedical research collaborative. Today its member organizations include seven of the state's largest health systems, including AnMed Health, Greenville Health System, McLeod Health, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Hospital Authority, Palmetto Health, Self Regional Healthcare, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, as well as the state's largest research-intensive universities, including Clemson University, MUSC and the University of South Carolina, including its Schools of Medicine at Columbia and Greenville. The unique collaboration was formed with the vision of improving South Carolina's public health and economic wellbeing through research. Visit www.healthsciencessc.org.

About the Association of American Medical Colleges

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is a not-for-profit association representing all 141 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and nearly 90 academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 148,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students and 115,000 resident physicians. Visit www.aamc.org/newsroom.

###