



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
School of Medicine



**For Immediate Release**

## **USC School of Medicine Columbia Lands \$1.6 Million NIH Grant to Establish Statewide Pediatric Research Network**

*USC School of Medicine, MUSC and Health Sciences South Carolina are co-principal investigators.*

COLUMBIA, S.C. (October 19, 2016) – The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a four-year, \$1.6 million grant to the [University of South Carolina \(USC\) School of Medicine](#) to establish a statewide Pediatric Clinical Trials Network. The purpose of the network is to boost participation in “research that makes a difference” for children and families across South Carolina. The grant places particular emphasis on clinical research to better understand and improve health outcomes for children and families living in rural and medically underserved areas of the state, which is critically important to states like South Carolina.

The [Medical University of South Carolina](#) (MUSC) and [Health Sciences South Carolina](#) (HSSC) will join the USC School of Medicine in leading the TRANSFORM SC clinical trials and research network. This shared leadership team will provide support to pediatricians and staff in geographically diverse sites across the state who are committed to enhancing their research capacity. This support includes linking teams through education, training, research-enabling informatics tools developed by HSSC, and a virtual clinical trials office facilitated by the Telehealth Research and Innovation Program at MUSC.

TRANSFORM SC is part of the [NIH ECHO Program](#) – short for Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes – and is part of a national effort to better understand the factors that impact child health and the long-term development of chronic diseases that continue into adulthood. The program targets conditions of high public health importance, including obesity, conditions such as autism and ADHD, respiratory diseases like asthma, and factors that occur around birth that impact the long-term health of children.

The TRANSFORM SC grant is focused on building a patient and family centered program and will be establishing research sites throughout the state, thus enabling children and families with health issues to more readily participate in outcome-changing research studies.

Dr. Christine Turley, the USC vice chair for Pediatric Research in the Department of Pediatrics and chief medical officer at HSSC, is joined by Dr. Lisa Knight, an assistant professor of Clinical Pediatrics, USC, and Dr. Andrew Atz, interim chair, Department of Pediatrics, MUSC, as co-principal investigators overseeing the grant. Turley, who is also a practicing pediatrician, said the grant’s “family-centered” approach has profound implications for South Carolina’s children, pediatricians and the state’s future.

“This is very much about helping families raise healthier kids. South Carolina’s children have high rates of asthma, obesity, diabetes, and conditions such as ADHD, autism, depression, and anxiety, all of which are concerning to parents and impact our future as a state. Thanks to the NIH grant, we will be able to establish research infrastructure that will engage pediatricians, researchers, parents, and children and help find solutions to conditions that threaten children’s health,” said Turley. “In many cases, children in rural communities are disproportionately affected by poor health, which makes it even more important to involve their families in pediatric research to discover solutions.”

Research teams will be established in every region of the state. Findings and best practices will be tested with other states participating in the ECHO program and shared nationally to improve the health of all children. TRANSFORM SC sites include:

- [AnMed Health](#)
- [Greenwood Genetics](#)
- [McLeod Health](#)
- [MUSC Children’s Hospital](#)
- [Palmetto Health](#)
- [Self Regional](#)
- [Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System](#)
- University of South Carolina School of Medicine

- more -

Turley said the first six months of the grant will focus on establishing research sites around the state, putting informatics and telehealth infrastructure in place, and recruiting and training new pediatrician researchers. The sites will then begin creating a registry of families interested in participating in future research studies. She assures parents this program is about helping our children have a hopeful future, by discovering factors that contribute to pediatric health. Once South Carolina's Pediatric Clinical Trials Network is up and running, the state will be well positioned to attract more federal funding for research and parents will have more opportunities to participate in studies relevant to their children's health.

"We are so honored that the NIH chose South Carolina for this grant," Turley said. "The healthier South Carolina's children are, the healthier the future of South Carolina will be."

#### **About University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia**

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine and its clinical faculty are committed to providing world-class health care to South Carolinians. Through the Palmetto Health-USC Medical Group, more than 160 clinical faculty physicians offer a breadth of specialty and subspecialty services to citizens across the state. Since welcoming its first class of students in 1977, the School of Medicine has provided a high-quality and personalized medical education to more than 3,000 graduates and is recognized nationally as the first medical school to offer students a four-year integrated ultrasound curriculum. Basic science and clinical researchers are involved in groundbreaking medical research in such areas as heart disease, stroke, inflammation, telehealth, and ultrasound. For more information, visit [www.med.sc.edu](http://www.med.sc.edu).

#### **About MUSC**

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, The Medical University of South Carolina is the oldest medical school in the South. Today, MUSC continues the tradition of excellence in education, research, and patient care. MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and residents in six colleges (Dental Medicine, Graduate Studies, Health Professions, Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy), and has nearly 13,000 employees, including approximately 1,500 faculty members. As the largest non-federal employer in Charleston, the university and its affiliates have collective annual budgets in excess of \$2.2 billion, with an annual economic impact of more than \$3.8 billion and annual research funding in excess of \$250 million. MUSC operates a 700-bed medical center, which includes a nationally recognized Children's Hospital, the Ashley River Tower (cardiovascular, digestive disease, and surgical oncology), Hollings Cancer Center (a National Cancer Institute-designated center), Level I Trauma Center, Institute of Psychiatry, and the state's only transplant center. In 2016, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the number one hospital in South Carolina. For more information on academic programs or clinical services, visit [musc.edu](http://musc.edu). For more information on hospital patient services, visit [muschealth.org](http://muschealth.org).

#### **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 with 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](http://www.healthsciencessc.org).

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