



PULASKI COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY News

August 2026

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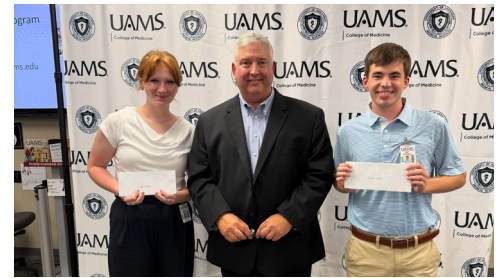
When you think professional, ethical, quality healthcare,
think physicians of Pulaski County Medical Society.

2026 PCMS Carolyn Clayton Scholarships Awarded

The 2026 PCMS Carolyn Clayton Scholarships were awarded on August 3, 2026 to Ella Roper and Jackson Edds during freshman orientation week at UAMS.

Ella Roper was born at UAMS almost twenty-three years ago and is now studying medicine there. She grew up in Little Rock and attended high school at Mount St. Mary Academy. She briefly moved away to study biology at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and is now home to pursue an education for my dream career. Her interest in medicine has been lifelong as her Dad was frequently cared for by medical professionals after an accident left him blind. She hopes to pass along the care provided to her family in their time of need to Arkansans who need the same..

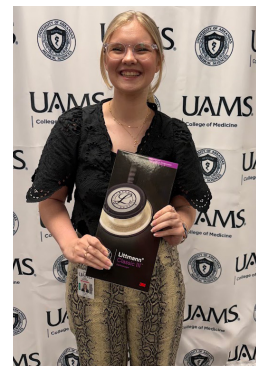
Jackson Edds is the oldest of five children. He grew up in Maumelle, Arkansas, where he still lives today. He graduated as valedictorian from Little Rock Christian Academy in 2022 and went on to attend Ouachita Baptist University, graduating summa cum laude in May 2026 with a B.S. in Biomedical Sciences and minors in Chemistry and Computer Science.



Ella Roper and Jackson Edds

2026 Freshman Orientation Luncheon

The Pulaski County Medical Society hosted lunch on Tuesday, August 4, 2025 during freshman orientation at the school of medicine. Executive Director Derek Rudkin, IOM, CAE gave a brief presentation about the society and its history with the college of medicine. Freshman Olivia Benefield was the winner of the Littman Classic III stethoscope that the society gave away on Thursday, August 6, 2026.



Olivia Benefield

Denial Management Pays Off

Elizabeth Woodcock, MBA, FACMPE, CPC

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Recent reports have demonstrated that denials are on the rise. Nearly 15 percent of all claims submitted to private insurance companies for reimbursement are initially denied. Though half of those denials are eventually overturned, the process is frustrating and costly. Not only do insurers have an economic incentive to deny claims, but the increasingly common use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the adjudication process also adds to the problem. For all its promise, AI doesn't have the capacity for nuance, at least not yet. This means that claims are denied based on whatever payment formula was established by the insurer, often leaving medical practices empty-handed.

The performance improvement process starts with understanding the current state of the revenue cycle. However, many medical practices don't have the capacity to review current processes and identify opportunities for improvement. Why? Denials aren't tracked correctly. Take the time to review your billing system's protocols for analyzing data about payment transactions from insurers. Payments are easy - it's the gap between the payment (if any) and the insurance contractual amount that needs to be scrutinized.

There is a fairly good chance a denied claim should actually have been paid. The key is to focus on each line item. For example - simply concluding: "Great! We got paid \$150 for that visit!" may result in leaving money on the table. Let's say "that" visit was six services - evaluation and management, immunization (and administration fee), venipuncture, EKG, and screening. Some things you should ask yourself: Did you get paid for each of the six services? If not, why?

- Perhaps the administration fee was paid at \$0, denied for being a bundled service. Was that determination consistent with the payer's requirements?
- Was each line item paid correctly? If not, why?

Another example could be that all payments were reduced because of penalties associated with not complying with Quality Payment Program requirements, thereby marked as CO237 and N807. Be sure to stay informed and take some time to dig-in - the full list of denial codes can be located [here](#).)

Identifying denials is challenging, due to the complexity of our reimbursement process. Employ the basic framework of splitting non-payments into controllable ("true" denials that could be overturned with effort by your staff) and non-controllable (contractual adjustments to which you agreed as enrolled providers that cannot be argued).

Consider these eleven denial management strategies to improve your bottom line:

1. Create a report of denials by payer, volume, and dollar; design a dashboard and request updates each month from your billing team.
2. Assign responsibility for denial management; divide between your coder(s) and biller(s) based on the reason for non-payment.
3. Prioritize efforts - don't spend hours working on a \$10 charge or the patients with their last name starting with "A;" sort the work queue by high dollars and high volume, then attack the list from there.
4. Engage your patient, as appropriate: "your insurance company has denied the authorization for this service..." Prompt them to call the insurer. Depending on the service, some patients are happy to proceed as self-pay (the insurance company may require advanced notice to the patient showing they are in agreement.)
5. Develop standard templates for appealing payers' decisions; create a library of communications indexed by category (e.g., coding, medical necessity, registration).
6. Leverage artificial intelligence to respond to simple denials; assign the complex ones to your staff.
7. Monitor efficacy; wait 30 days after an appeal - did the payer change their decision? If not, up the ante by submitting an appeal to the payer's medical director or other such higher-level tactic.
8. Measure and report (internally) the financial return on your efforts; include the payments received when a payer overturns a denial.

9. Dig into root causes; many denials originate in the practice - focus on preventing them, not just managing them.
10. Lean into the intake process: do we capture accurate information from patients? Equally, if not more importantly, how do we verify it? Turn over every rock; for example, you may find that your office-based registration works quite well, but problems lie in your inpatient consultation services.
11. Report habitual inappropriate denials to your state insurance commissioner and/or medical

If you need extra motivation to address denials, there is a higher purpose. Recognize that there are societal benefits to your efforts. If an insurance company denies a service over and over again, and we say (or do) nothing, the insurer may discontinue any payment consideration for that service in the future. This has happened many times, as we grow tired of getting denied and simply stop billing for the service. The insurer then has the upper hand, as there is no evidence that the services are even being provided. Please, if the service is eligible to be coded and billed, do it!



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UAMS Graduates 1,237 Health Professionals

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) recently held commencement ceremonies to recognize 1,237 students who earned degrees or certificates from the university's five colleges and graduate school.

UAMS awarded a total of 1,249 degrees or certificates: 167 to students in the College of Medicine, 159 in the College of Nursing, 743 in the College of Health Professions, 52 in the College of Pharmacy, 72 in the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health, and 56 in the UAMS Graduate School. Twelve students earned multiple degrees or certificates.

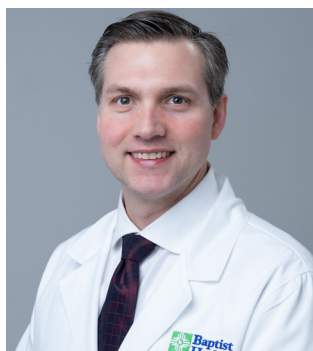
Degrees and certificates conferred at this year's ceremonies included doctor of philosophy; doctor of

medicine; doctor of pharmacy; doctor of nursing practice; master of science; master of nursing science; bachelor of science in nursing; doctor of public health; master of public health; master of health administration; master of science in healthcare data analytics; and a variety of allied health disciplines, including doctor of audiology, doctor of physical therapy, master of physician assistant studies, master of science, and bachelor of science.

The following are graduates of the UAMS colleges and graduate school who authorized the release of their names and hometowns. Graduates are divided by college and hometown unless otherwise noted. If no state is listed, then the graduate is from Arkansas.

UAMS Commencement





Dr. James C. Walker

James C. Walker, MD, FACS, Joins Baptist Health Surgical and Specialty Clinic-Conway

Dr. Walker is a board-certified general surgeon specializing in minimally invasive, robotic-assisted procedures and enjoys advanced endocrine surgery. With more than 11 years

experience, he is known for

his patient-centered approach and commitment to clear communication throughout every stage of care.

"I believe patients should fully understand their diagnosis and treatment options," said Dr. Walker. "I take time to explain procedures carefully, using drawings and visual explanations, so patients feel informed, comfortable, and confident in the choices for their care."

Beyond his surgical practice, Dr. Walker is a recognized leader in trauma care. He served for seven years as the

trauma medical director for CHI St. Vincent in Little Rock and has conducted numerous state surveys as an Arkansas State Trauma Site Physician Surveyor.

A Little Rock native, Dr. Walker earned his Medical Doctorate from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in 2009. He completed both his surgical internship and residency at UAMS, where he also conducted research focused on the effects of diabetes on the nervous system. He is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

In his free time, Dr. Walker enjoys running, woodworking and building airplane models and computers.

Baptist Health Surgical and Specialty Clinic-Conway is located at 625 United Drive, Suite 270. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (501) 329-1415 or visit Baptist-Health.org.

Arkansas Medical Society Names Carl Vogelpohl Executive Director

Veteran Arkansas Leader Brings Experience in Healthcare, Public Policy, and Emerging Technology as Society Begins Planned Leadership Transition

The Arkansas Medical Society Executive Committee and Board of Trustees announce the appointment of Carl Vogelpohl, a veteran Arkansas leader with experience across healthcare, government, public policy, and the private sector, as the organization's executive director. Vogelpohl begins his role July 1, with longtime Executive Vice President David Wroten, Of Counsel, to ensure a smooth transition ahead of Wroten's full retirement in 2027.

Vogelpohl joins AMS after serving as senior advisor to Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin, part of a career spanning more than 30 years of leadership in the public and private sectors. His background includes senior roles in state and federal government, healthcare administration, and private-sector work with hospitals, surgery centers, and physician practices. Vogelpohl also serves on the national leadership faculty for the National Association of Attorneys General.

"For more than a decade, Carl Vogelpohl has been one of my most senior and trusted advisors – in Congress, as

lieutenant governor, and now as attorney general," said Griffin. "The Arkansas Medical Society is gaining a leader with tremendous experience, knowledge, and capabilities.

I know Carl is ready for this challenge, and he is ready to bring his skills and experience to bear to take the Society to the next level."

"Our Board conducted a thorough search with a clear sense of what this moment requires," said AMS President Naveen Patil, MD. "Physicians need a strong voice in the policy decisions that affect their practices and their patients. Carl understands healthcare, public policy, and organizational leadership, and we are confident he is the right leader to move the Society forward."

Vogelpohl's career in healthcare began early, including health center administration and more than 15 years in the private sector working with hospitals, surgery centers,



*Carl Vogelpohl,
Executive Director*

Arkansas Medical Society Names Carl Vogelpohl Executive Director

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and physician practices. He later held senior government roles, including chief of staff positions in Congress and Arkansas state government. He also brings focused executive education in artificial intelligence and emerging technology, including advanced certifications from the University of Oxford's Saïd Business School, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and Vanderbilt University.

"The Arkansas Medical Society has spent more than 150 years advancing medicine and advocating for physicians," said Vogelpohl. "My responsibility is to build on that foundation by strengthening physician engagement, expanding the Society's influence, and ensuring Arkansas physicians have a powerful voice in the decisions that shape healthcare. I'm honored by the Board's confidence and eager to get to work."

Baptist Health College Little Rock Announces New Online RN-to-BSN Baccalaureate Program



Baptist Health College Little Rock (BHCLR) is proud to announce the launch of its first baccalaureate degree program since its founding in 1921: the online RN-to-BSN program.

For over a century, the college has served as an invaluable institution, guiding future health care professionals with excellence and Christian compassion. The college is fortunate to officially offer an online baccalaureate program, one that builds upon its nursing profession legacy. "This program represents a significant milestone for BHCLR and will pave the way for future educational opportunities," said Dr. Crystal Rose, dean of nursing.

Designed for registered nurses seeking to advance their careers, the program offers a seamless pathway for BHCLR alumni and nursing professionals to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Additionally, this marks the college's first fully online, distance education program.

Students will engage in immersive learning experiences designed to enhance clinical practice. The curriculum integrates pioneering health care innovations and emerging areas in the health care landscape. These areas include artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, remote monitoring, and risk stratification. Blending traditional nursing practices with a modern curriculum will equip graduates for the future of nursing.

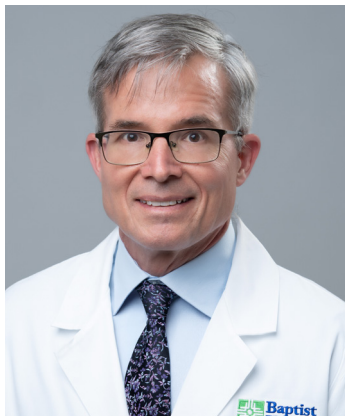
"We are so excited to offer this innovative program which will help prepare our graduates to become leaders in the nursing field," said Dr. Lindsey Gates, associate dean of nursing and director of the RN-to-BSN program.

The inaugural cohort will begin in January 2027. The program will be offered twice annually, with cohorts starting in January and August. Students will complete their degree in just 12 months. To be accepted into the RN-to-BSN program, students must have an unrestricted Arkansas RN license, a compact state license, or a right to practice in Arkansas (endorsement).

The college has worked diligently to develop an enduring program built on its core mission, values, and purpose. BHCLR is deeply grateful for the support from the Baptist Health system and strives to continue its focus on holistic health care, helping patients live their lives to the fullest.

Those interested in the program can start applying now at bhclr.edu. This is the BSN built for you.

Michael Huber, MD, FACC, Joins Baptist Health Heart Institute/Arkansas Cardiology



Michael Huber, MD

Baptist Health Heart Institute/Arkansas Cardiology recently welcomed Michael Huber, MD, FACC. As a specialist in general cardiology, Dr. Huber brings extensive expertise in diagnosing and treating various cardiovascular conditions to the North Little Rock community.

Dr. Huber served 17 years in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, including a

particularly rewarding time at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where he cared for sick and injured soldiers air evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dr. Huber earned his medical degree from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. He completed his Internal Medicine residency at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, followed by a fellowship in General Cardiology at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

"I consider it a privilege, honor, and pleasure to take care of my patients," Dr. Huber said. "My goal is to provide the best patient experiences and outcomes. Using innovative new technology combined with time proven therapies we are advancing into the new frontier of cardiovascular care."

Patients will have access to a wide range of services and procedures under Dr. Huber's care, such as comprehensive inpatient and outpatient cardiology care, coronary and peripheral angiography, transthoracic and transesophageal echocardiography, cardiac nuclear testing, and the implantation of Cardiomems heart failure monitors.

Dr. Huber is triple board-certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in Cardiovascular Disease, Nuclear Cardiology and Internal Medicine.

Dr. Huber will see patients at the following locations:

- North Little Rock: 3343 Springhill Drive, Suite 1035, North Little Rock, AR 72117
- Crossett: 1015 Unity Rd, Crossett, AR 71635
- Hot Springs: 147 Section Line Road, Suite J (Keystone Crossing Center), Hot Springs, AR 71913

William G. Jones, MD, Named Market President of CHI St. Vincent

[CHI St. Vincent](#), a leading regional health network serving Central and Southwest Arkansas, has announced that William G. Jones, MD, has been named Market President for Arkansas by CommonSpirit Health. Dr. Jones previously served as President of CHI St. Vincent Infirmary.



William G. Jonesw, MD

"I am proud and honored to have been selected to serve as the next Market President for CHI St. Vincent," said Dr. Jones. "Nobody loves Arkansas and St. Vincent more than I do, and I look forward to leading our team in providing the best possible patient care to the people of our community."

Dr. Jones joined CHI St. Vincent in 2019 as Vice President for Medical Affairs and subsequently as the Chief Medical Officer. He was named President of CHI St. Vincent Infirmary in 2023. A native of Arkansas, Jones is a graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, trained at New York Presbyterian

William G. Jones, MD, Named Market President of CHI St. Vincent

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and Memorial Sloan Kettering, and served on the faculty at Cornell University Medical College in New York City. He practiced cardiothoracic surgery for over 27 years in Dallas earning recognitions in "Best Doctors in Dallas," "Texas Super Doctors" and US News "Best Doctors in America." Jones currently sits on numerous community boards including the Arkansas Food Bank and Fifty for the Future.

"We have already achieved so much at St. Vincent in my time here," said Dr. Jones. "The Arkansas Market

holds the top spot in CommonSpirit Health for the highest quality and safety scores, and all of our hospitals are now rated Leapfrog Grade B or higher. No other health system in Arkansas can make that claim, and I'm honored for this opportunity to lead our team as we continue to set the standard for patient care in Arkansas."

OrthoArkansas Surgeon Donates Bone Marrow for Lifesaving Transplant

Years ago, as a medical student. Derrick Henry swabbed his cheek, dropped the kit in the mail, and went back to studying. This spring, that small act found its purpose when Dr. Henry, now a foot and ankle surgeon at OrthoArkansas, donated bone marrow for a lifesaving transplant.



Derrick Henry, MD

Dr. Henry joined the registry through the National Marrow Donor Program, formerly known as Be the Match, after watching his mother-in-law go through a bone marrow transplant of her own. He had all but forgotten he was on the registry when the call came telling him he was a preliminary match.

"I told them, if I'm the person on the other end of that call, or that person's family, I want whoever gets asked to say yes, no matter what," Dr. Henry said. "So the answer was yes. There was a lot to figure out, what it

meant for clinic, for surgery schedules, for my team and my patients. But the answer was always yes."

The donation took place in Washington, D.C. Traveling with him was his father, Randy Henry, who works alongside Dr. Henry every day as his clinical assistant at OrthoArkansas.

"To be away from his family and everything he does here, and to be one hundred percent committed to it, that says everything," Randy Henry said. "I'm very proud of the man and the physician he's become."

The procedure itself took about 45 minutes. Dr. Henry woke up in recovery with some soreness in his lower back, and by that evening he and his father were walking two blocks down the street for pizza.

Making the trip possible took his team back home, who rearranged two full days of clinic schedules, so Dr. Henry's patients were cared for while he was away.

Because the program keeps donors and recipients anonymous, Dr. Henry will never know whose life his donation touched. He says that is not the point.

"You never know when you or someone you love will be the one who needs it," Dr. Henry said. "If you're in a healthy position to do this for someone, it's a great gift to give. Don't hesitate to at least consider it."

Joining the registry starts with a simple cheek swab. More information is available at www.nmdp.org

CHI St. Vincent Ranked Best in Central Arkansas for Cardiology, Heart and Vascular Surgery

U.S. News and World Report Ranks Infirmiry, North a "High Performing" in Eight Procedures/Conditions

CHI St. Vincent Infirmiry, a leading regional hospital serving Central and Southwest Arkansas, has been ranked the best hospital in Central Arkansas for Cardiology, Heart and Vascular Surgery by U.S. News & World Report for the second year in a row. The CHI St. Vincent system was also ranked as High Performing in eight procedures or conditions. CHI St. Vincent Infirmiry was ranked for abdominal aortic aneurysm repair, aortic valve surgery, heart bypass surgery, hip replacement, back surgery (spinal fusion) and colon cancer surgery. CHI St. Vincent North ranked as high performing for kidney failure and pneumonia.

"The latest U.S. News & World Report rankings further confirm our commitment to providing quality healthcare for our patients," said St. Vincent Market President William G. Jones, MD. "At St. Vincent, we pride ourselves on excellent care that puts the patient's health as the top priority. I'm thrilled to see the hard work of our

clinical and support teams honored with this national recognition."

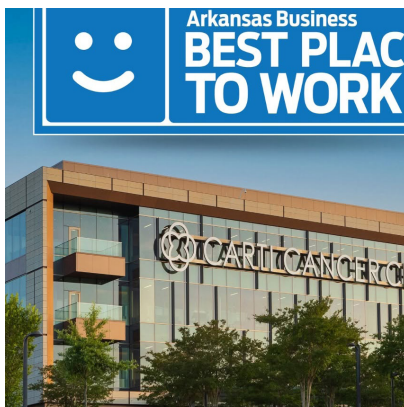
CHI St. Vincent Infirmiry ranked best in Arkansas in aortic valve surgery, hip replacement, lung cancer surgery and colon cancer surgery. CHI St. Vincent Infirmiry and North are 2 of the 61 CommonSpirit member hospitals recognized in the annual U.S. News & World Report rankings. CommonSpirit hospitals received 288 high-performing rankings in total.

"This recognition not only speaks to the profound skill and commitment of our physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and staff, but also highlights CommonSpirit's consistent pursuit of clinical excellence and compassionate care across our entire national footprint, from top-ranked specialty care to vital community services," said Thomas McGinn, MD, MPH, Executive Vice President, Chief Physician Executive Officer of CommonSpirit Health.

CARTI Named a Best Place to Work in Arkansas

Recognized for Compassionate, Collaborative and Patient-Centered Culture

As CARTI celebrates its 50th Anniversary, the not-for-profit provider announced it has been named one of the "Best Places to Work in Arkansas." The recognition reflects the commitment of CARTI's nearly 1,200-person team, united by a singular focus on making trusted cancer care accessible.



"This recognition is a reflection of the people who make CARTI such a special place," said Adam Head, president and CEO. "For 50 years, we've fostered a culture built on trust, collaboration and a shared commitment to serving others. Our team members bring compassion and purpose to every interaction, and we're grateful to celebrate this honor with them."

CARTI's selection follows a rigorous two-party survey led by Workforce Research Group in partnership with Arkansas Business. The process included an in-depth employer assessment of CARTI's benefits, policies, practices and demographics as well as an employee feedback survey measuring full- and part-time team members' opinions across nine key focus areas, ranging from workplace experience to leadership and work-life balance.

Since 1976, CARTI has steadily expanded its statewide presence, now employing close to 1,200 team members who serve more than 60,000 patients annually. The not-for-profit provider offers a comprehensive range of benefits and growth opportunities, such as professional development, clinical training and tuition reimbursement. It is dedicated to ensuring all team members feel seen and appreciated through formal recognition programs, peer-nominated awards, anniversaries and more. Additional details about careers at CARTI are available [here](#).