

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

IHL APPROVES AFFILIATION BETWEEN UMMC, METHODIST REHABILITATION

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[Photos can be found here.](#)

JACKSON, Miss. – Two of Mississippi’s leading health-care providers are formally affiliating to provide a powerful new model for neuroscience research, education and clinical care in the state.

The affiliation, approved today by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees, aligns the expertise of the University of Mississippi Medical Center and Methodist Rehabilitation Center and promises enhanced services to thousands of state residents recovering from stroke, brain and spinal injuries, movement disorders and other neurological conditions.

“We plan to bring our complementary capabilities together into a neuroscience institute that should pave the way for more specialized services, stronger educational programs and more nationally competitive research,” said Methodist Rehab CEO Mark Adams. “Affiliating will allow us to do something much bigger than either organization could achieve separately.”

That’s important in a state that leads the nation in the number of people living with stroke per capita (4.3 percent) and has one of the highest brain injury rates in the nation. The Mississippi State Trauma Surveillance System reports that the state’s rate of spinal cord injury is 1.5 to 2 times higher than the U.S. average.

The partners will confront these problems by building on each other’s strengths. As Mississippi’s only academic medical center and with the state’s only Level 1 trauma center, UMMC has developed strengths in orthopedic and neuro-trauma care, neurology and neurosurgery. MRC is a nationally recognized, private non-profit rehabilitation hospital that has helped thousands overcome disabling injuries and illness through its comprehensive programs and patient-focused research.

Since 1975, the two institutions have coexisted on UMMC’s sprawling campus, pursuing similar goals along largely separate paths. The agreement will eventually integrate UMMC’s existing inpatient rehabilitation programs into MRC’s seven-story rehabilitation hospital and forge a collaboration focused on neuroscience projects.

“We’ll make each other better,” said Dr. James E. Keeton, UMMC’s vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine. “Creation of an institute gives us a chance to be a leader in physical medicine and rehabilitation in the mid-South and is in keeping with our mission as an academic medical center.”

The affiliation, which falls short of a merger, allows both organizations to remain independent but brings them into closer alignment.

MRC will contribute a portion of the start-up funds of the institute and to the salary of the institute’s executive director, a new position reporting to the UMMC vice chancellor. Both organizations will appoint members to internal and external advisory boards. A community advisory board will provide ongoing strategic direction for the institute, while an internal advisory board will address more day-to-day operational issues.

UMMC and MRC predict it will take several years to fully develop all of the goals related to creation of the institute and consolidation of rehabilitation services. As an initial goal, UMMC will begin phasing out its 25-bed University Rehabilitation Center on Lakeland Drive. Within two years, MRC will complete renovation of its third floor to accommodate UMMC patients and about 40 clinical rehabilitation staff, who may either become employees of MRC, be leased from UMMC to maintain their retirement benefits, or pursue other positions with the university. Current inpatient physicians and nurse practitioners on staff at MRC will become employees of UMMC. No net loss of jobs is expected.

As part of the agreement, MRC will follow UMMC's practices and policies related to serving the uninsured and indigent who meet the medical necessity guidelines for inpatient rehabilitation services.

The affiliation may eventually yield a new Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and an associated residency program.

"Reorganizing our programs as an academic medical center-based institute will give us a competitive edge in recruiting additional world class clinicians and researchers for Mississippi," Keeton said.

The leaders say another benefit of the affiliation will be the enhanced collaboration between both centers' clinical research programs.

"Our researchers will have more latitude and leverage to work together on exciting and expanded new research projects," said Adams. "Together, we will be much more competitive for federal research funding as well as large private foundation research funding. An early goal is to seek federally sponsored Model System grants for brain injury and spinal cord injury. This will foster the recruitment of additional highly specialized researchers and provide improved educational opportunities for medical students, as well."

The next step in the process is to bring in an outside consultant to lay out a detailed consolidation plan, as well as a detailed plan for the proposed institute.

The focus of the affiliation is on inpatient care and does not include the partners' respective programs in outpatient care.

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Please forward this message to colleagues who might be interested. If you wish to be removed from this list or know of a colleague to add, send an e-mail message to: jmazurak@umc.edu.

Methodist Rehabilitation Center provides comprehensive medical rehabilitation programs for people with spinal cord and brain injuries, stroke and other neurological and orthopedic disorders. The 124-bed state-of-the-art hospital in Jackson has twice been designated a Traumatic Brain Injury Model System site by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and is also the only hospital in Mississippi twice named one of America's Best Hospitals by U.S. News & World Report.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's health-care enterprise includes five hospitals and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's population. A major goal of the Medical Center is

the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at (601) 984-1100 or umc.edu/publicaffairs