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## Newsroom

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# Rural Health Research Institute Receives National Grants

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Georgia Southern University's Rural Health Research Institute (RHRI) has been awarded two national grants in excess of \$5 million that will change the outcome of health care in rural communities through outreach, training and research.

The grants were awarded to Dr. Jacob Warren and Dr. Bryant Smalley, the founding co-executive directors of the RHRI. Warren is an epidemiologist in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, and Smalley is a clinical psychologist in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

Georgia Southern's RHRI was founded in 2011 as an interdisciplinary hub of rural health research and outreach that spans five Colleges within the University. Its mission is to improve health in rural areas by promoting cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research and outreach that connects

faculty from diverse fields and promotes the development of researchers examining rural health issues.

The first grant, awarded from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for \$450,000, will provide diabetes education to patients in rural areas through Project ADEPT (Applied Diabetes Education Program using Telehealth). Project ADEPT will bring information to diabetes patients on how to care for themselves and manage their condition.

The computer-based system is complete with a portable webcam that has the capability of being moved to different rooms in a clinic for one-on-one visits with a single patient or larger groups. "Project ADEPT can be used for one session, or to give a patient the information needed over a period of

time. We are making this available in English and Spanish in an effort to make sure anyone who needs the information will have access to it. Our goal is to help the patients make long-term health behavior changes that will lead to a better quality of life," said Warren.

The program is expected to reach approximately 750 diabetes patients in Candler, Emanuel, Tattnall, and Toombs counties who may otherwise have a difficult time accessing important information on how to best manage the symptoms and possible complications of diabetes. According to Smalley, a diabetes educator will conduct the telehealth program for the next three years in these counties, with the prospect of expansion.

The second grant, awarded in the amount of \$5.1 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), designates the RHRI as a Center of Excellence for the Elimination of Rural Health Disparities. "Georgia Southern's RHRI is the only Center of Excellence focused on rural health in the nation," said Smalley.

Funding for the new five-year project comes from NIH's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and will allow the RHRI to enact a comprehensive rural health disparity elimination program spanning research, training and community outreach.

The grant's activities include developing and testing new rural-specific health promotion programs designed to improve diabetes, hypertension and prostate cancer outcomes; enacting a rural health disparities elimination summer training program for undergraduate and graduate students; implementing new mentoring programs for faculty wishing to pursue careers in rural health; and creating a new community capacity-building initiative to improve health outcomes throughout rural southeast Georgia. The grant, which will last through 2017, will also create 10 new grant funded jobs on campus.

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