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Vanderbilt Health News Digest for the Federal Policymaker

Compiled by the Office of Federal Relations,
www.vumc.org/federal-relations

VANDERBILT ADVANCEMENTS IN PATIENT CARE

Opening of 12th floor expansion of Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

Read the full story by Christina Echegaray on VUMC News



Ten years after leaders at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt announced the Growing to New Heights Campaign to add a four-floor, 160,000-square-foot expansion atop the existing hospital building, the last and final floor is complete. Patients moved onto the new 38-bed, 40,000-square-foot floor Feb. 24. *(4/9/25)*

Welcome of new facility dog Velour

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News



Velour is the youngest employee at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. With only a few months on the job, "Vee Vee" as she is affectionately called, is already in high demand. Velour joins Squid, the hospital's first facility dog, who was introduced in 2020. Both dogs are part of the Canine Clinicians Facility Dog Program at Monroe Carell and are members of the Patient- and Family-Centered Care team that supports, comforts and provides care to patients and families. *(2/28/25)*

Vanderbilt Health hosts intensive trauma course for military medical personnel

Read the full story by Jill Clendening on VUMC News



VUMC recently hosted a two-day Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma (ASSET+) course designed for military medical providers, marking the first time this advanced course has been taught at a civilian medical facility. The ASSET+ course, part of the U.S. military Emergency War Surgery curriculum, establishes combat training competencies and provides training for military medical personnel working in deployed environments, military treatment facilities, and Level 1 trauma treatment facilities. *(3/7/25)*

VUMC to implement team-based effort to improve high blood pressure control

Read the full story by Jill Clendening on VUMC News



With funding from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), VUMC will implement a team-based approach to controlling high blood pressure. Set to launch in August, the four-year project will involve primary care practitioners referring patients with uncontrolled hypertension to clinical pharmacists for targeted, evidence-based management. The 12-week telehealth program will include: medication adherence assessments; therapeutic lifestyle counseling; medication titration; and home blood pressure monitoring. (4/8/25)

Portal opens access to diabetes self-management

Read the full story on VUMC Discoveries in Medicine



Staying on top of diabetes management can be challenging, so Vanderbilt researchers found a way for patients with diabetes to make better use of the My Health at Vanderbilt patient portal, one of the longest running patient portals in the U.S. *My Diabetes Care* is a component of *My Health at Vanderbilt* specifically designed to aid patients with diabetes self-management with basic reminders, educational materials, and a gamification tool that provides a comparison of diabetes control with other participating patients.

Novel device to monitor atrial pressure inside patient's heart in real time

Read the full story by Matt Batcheldor on VUMC News



For the first time, a Vanderbilt Health patient has been implanted with a novel left atrial pressure monitoring device (the V-LAP device), part of a clinical trial being conducted at only five centers in the United States.

Wesley Crutcher of Paducah, KY, received the device. His medical team can now monitor his heart remotely and he can change his medications based on phone notifications. *(2/26/25)*

Tennessee's first successful kidney transplant using new organ preservation technology performed at Vanderbilt University Hospital

Read the full story on VUMC News



Vanderbilt Health kidney transplant surgeons are the first in Tennessee to use a new FDA-approved portable hypothermic perfusion technology designed to preserve and transport donor kidneys. By pioneering new approaches, VUMC can serve more patients, including high-risk patients who may not be candidates at other medical centers. *(4/3/25)*

Innovation in esophageal disease diagnosis: mucosal integrity testing

Read the full story on VUMC Discoveries in Medicine



A novel endoscopic tool developed at VUMC diagnoses gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) by mapping the entire esophagus.

"Not only are we able to diagnose and start them on a treatment plan the same day, but we can also tell them as soon as they wake up from endoscopy if their tests are normal," said Dhyanesh Patel, MD, a VUMC gastroenterologist and co-inventor of the MiVu Mucosal Integrity Testing System. *(4/30/25)*

Newer preventive options helping reduce infant RSV-associated hospitalization rates

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News



A recent study in the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* found that RSV-related hospitalization rates among infants were 30%-40% lower during the 2024-2025 season compared to pre-COVID levels.

"The introduction of a maternal RSV vaccination and the infant monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab, is associated with meaningful reductions in infant hospitalizations," said Natasha Halasa, MD, MPH, VUMC professor of pediatrics and study co-author. *(5/8/25)*

Primary Care Autism Team honored for developing new care pathway

Read the full story by Leigh MacMillan on VUMC News



Several years ago, clinicians at the Monroe Carell primary care clinic recognized a gap in care: there was no protocol for direct follow-up care after an autism diagnosis. The Primary Care Autism Team, a group of multidisciplinary clinicians, implemented a protocol at five primary care clinics within the Vanderbilt Health System. The protocol includes automatic scheduling for a new autism-focused clinic visit, clinical decision-making guides embedded in the EHR system, educational handouts for families, and training for primary care providers. *(3/20/25)*

Interns with disabilities graduate Project SEARCH at Monroe Carell

Read the full story by Forrest Sanders on News Channel 5



Since 2005, Project Search, a nine month vocational training program at Monroe Carell, has helped individuals with developmental disabilities gain on-the-job training. Many graduates of Project Search go on to permanent roles at Monroe Carell in departments ranging from the pharmacy, surgery center, pediatric rehabilitation, patient transport, and more. *News Channel 5* recently profiled Nicholas Bojczuk, a 2025 Project Search graduate. *(5/19/25)*

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT—PATIENT STORIES

A stay in the hospital didn't stop fifth grader Carter Williamson from graduation

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News

On Tuesday, May 27, a group of school staff, friends, family and hospital team members joined together at the Monroe Carell Performance Stage area to recreate an elementary school graduation ceremony that 11-year-old Carter Williamson because of time in the hospital.

"I really wanted to be at graduation, but it was nice to see all my family and all my teachers here to support and congratulate me."



Gatlin Winter was in the hospital recovering from a heart transplant. His wife Ashlynn was in labor with their first baby. Could he get to her side?

Read the full story by Matt Batcheldor on VUMC News

Gatlin Winter was at Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital, recovering from a heart transplant when he made an unexpected detour to a different unit — Labor & Delivery.

Gatlin's wife, Ashlynn, was 37 weeks pregnant and needing an emergency delivery due to preeclampsia. His care team helped Gatlin move across the street to be by Ashlynn's side, an exceptional situation for someone recovering from a heart transplant. *(2/25/25)*



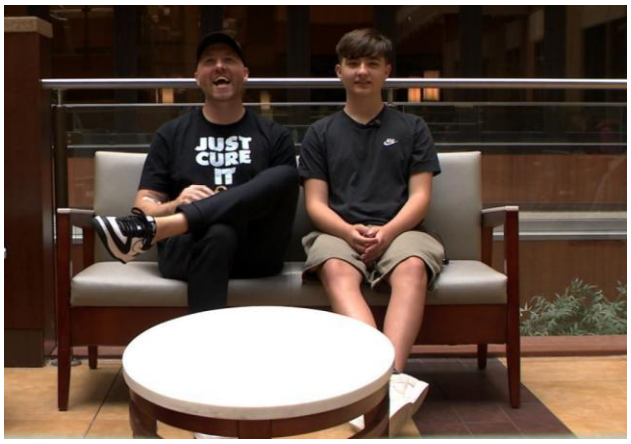
"I'm here to save you"; teen son to donate stem cells to dad with leukemia

Read the full story by News Channel 5; photo source Fox 5.

Teenager Reace Bell is preparing to donate stem cells to his father Coltin who is receiving treatment for acute myeloid leukemia at VUMC. Father and son make the 210-mile trip from their home in Olive Branch, MS.

"I was a little nervous, but I was only nervous it wouldn't work," Reace said. "It's doing something I've never done, but hey, I'm happy about this."

"That's just a testament to who he is as a person," Coltin said. "It is literally going to save my life. It's what I have to do to live. He's just glad to do it which is really cool."



"I was pretty happy I got a chance to actually save him," Reace continued. "I feel like this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to do this."

LEADING EDGE RESEARCH

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine fifth in the nation in NIH research funding

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News



Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) ranked fifth in the nation in fiscal year 2024 in total research grant support provided by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), according to figures compiled by the nonprofit Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research. VUSM received $586 million in NIH grant support in FY24 among more than 500 NIH-funded researchers. *(2/26/25)*

VUMC to develop AI technology for therapeutic antibody discovery

Read the full story by Leigh MacMillan on VUMC News

ARPA-H



VUMC was awarded up to $30 million from the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) to build a massive antibody-antigen atlas and develop AI algorithms to engineer therapeutic antibodies to treat cancer, autoimmune disorders, and prevent infectious diseases.

Designing antibodies based on a target protein would dramatically speed up therapy development time, because scientists would no longer need to find the "needle in a haystack" antibodies from patient samples. *(3/10/25)*

Potential therapeutic for Duchenne muscular dystrophy takes step forward

Read the full story by Leigh MacMillan on VUMC News

NIH FDA



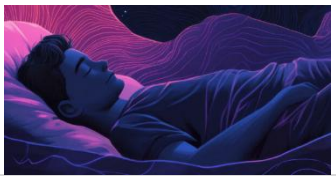
Ifetroban, a drug with connections to VUMC research, improved heart function in patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), the company Cumberland Pharmaceuticals recently reported.

Heart failure is the leading cause of death in DMD patients, but there are no approved therapies that specifically target DMD-related heart disease. The positive findings from the Phase 2 FIGHT DMD trial support further study to treat cardiac complications of DMD. Discovery and development of ifetroban was supported by funding from the National Institutes of Health and Food and Drug Administration. *(3/12/25)*

'Trajectories' of poor sleep over time may shorten your life: study

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News

NIH NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE



An unhealthy "trajectory" in the amount of sleep you get each night, over time, may reduce your lifespan, finds a new study with 47,000 participants published in *JAMA Network Open* by VUMC researchers. Long-term trajectories of irregular sleep durations shorter than 7 hours or longer than 9 hours increased the risk of death from all causes by as much as 29%. This research was made possible with funding from the National Cancer Institute. (3/12/25)

Team finds a better way to identify newborns at risk for opioid withdrawal

Read the full story by Paul Govern on VUMC News

In study published in *Pediatrics*, VUMC researchers have developed a way to identify infants at risk for severe neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome, or NOWS.



The new risk model, based on data from TennCare Medicaid, had an accuracy rate of 96% in identifying infants at risk of NOWS in retrospectice data. VUMC researchers are now developing a clinical trial for a new clinical decision support tool. This study was supported by funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. *(3/5/25)*

Sedentary behavior is an independent risk factor for Alzheimer's disease

Read the full story by Stephanie Bryan on VUMC News

According to a new research study published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, VUMC researchers found that increased time spent sitting or lying down in aging adults was associated with worse cognition and brain shrinkage in areas related to risk for developing Alzheimer's disease. Of the 404 participants, those who spent more time being sedentary were more likely to experience cognitive decline and neurodegenerative changes regardless of how much they exercised. Funding from the National Instutue on Aging made this study posisble. *(5/13/25)*



Veterans with depression have increased risk of heart failure: study

Read the full story by Matt Batchelor on VUMC News

U.S. veterans with depression had a 14% higher risk of heart failure, a new VUMC-led study found, even after adjusting for traditional risk factors. The new study analyzing data from 2.8 million veterans in *JAMA Network Open* provides patients and clinicians with another reason to screen for and treat depression. Depression was also associated with a greater prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (12.9% vs. 7.1%), smoking status (43.2% vs. 34.7%) and alcohol use disorder (35.4% vs. 11.3%). This study was supported by funding from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. *(5/8/25)*



$4.1 million grant awarded to study unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions

Read the full story by Evan Dorian on VUMC News

Researchers at VUMC have been awarded a five-year, $4.1 million grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to assess antibiotic prescriptions and antimicrobial stewardship in unplanned care spaces across Vanderbilt Health, including emergency rooms, retail clinics and walk-in clinics. Antibiotic prescriptions, particularly those that are not necessary to treat infections, may contribute to antimicrobial resistance. The practice of antimicrobial stewardship seeks to combat this issue by promoting optimal use, dosage and duration of antibiotics. *(4/10/25)*



More from VUMC Discoveries in Medicine



Coma in critically ill raises **risk of mortality**
(NIH/VA support)



GLP-1 agonist may **slow kidney disease** in broad range of patients
(NIH)

AI automation could accelerate **diagnosis of rare diseases**
(NIH)



Fewer side effects with new **sickle cell treatment**
(NIH)

Improving coordinated care for **premature infants**
(NIH)



Nurse practitioners add value to event emergency teams

Improvements to **scoliosis surgery**

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

New initiative, Champ's Cupboard, aids families with nutrition access issues

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News

The transition from hospital to home can be hectic, particularly for families experiencing food insecurity. Champ's Cupboard at Monroe Carell is a new program designed to serve as a bridge for families with nutrition access issues.

During the hospitalization admission process, families fill out a standardized screening form. Families who screen positive for food insecurity receive a "Take-Out Ticket," a voucher for a box of nonperishable food or a family-size frozen meal upon discharge.

The program works with community groups Second Harvest Food Bank and The Nashville Food Project, with future plans to collaborate with Rooted Community Health. *(4/8/25)*



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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