Summer 2025

VUMC Quarterly

Vanderbilt Health News Digest for the Federal Policymaker

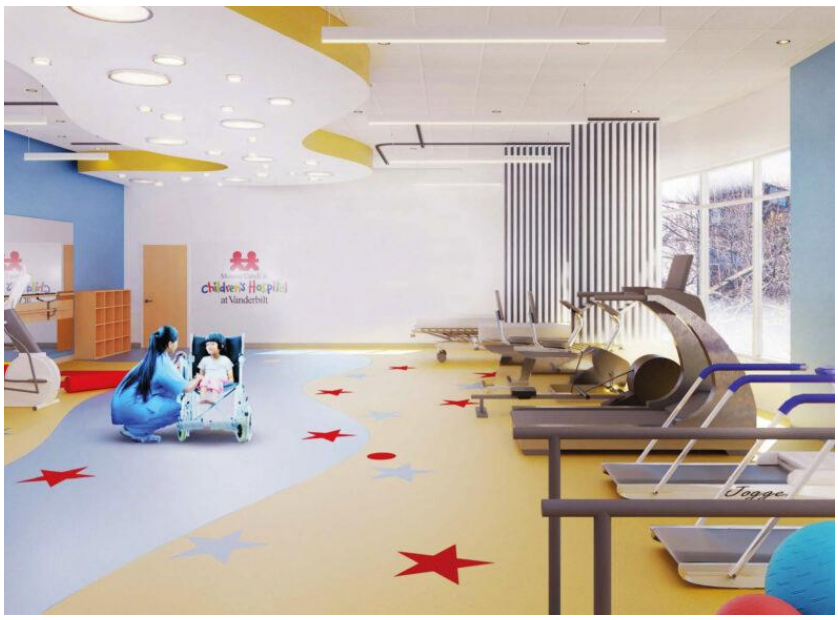
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VANDERBILT ADVANCEMENTS IN PATIENT CARE

Community comes together to bring inpatient rehabilitation to Tennessee children

Read the full story by Christina Echegaray on VUMC News

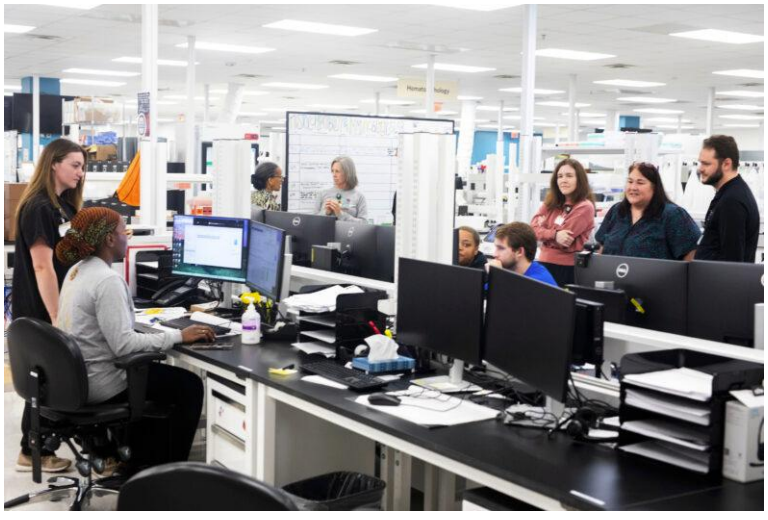
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt announced plans to create Tennessee's first inpatient pediatric rehabilitation unit to keep the state's children closer to home while recovering from life-altering illnesses or injuries. The new inpatient pediatric rehabilitation unit and program — the first and only in Tennessee for children 13 and younger — will be housed on the eighth floor of Monroe Carell. The unit is expected to include: 12 specialized patient rooms; a gym; spaces for practicing activities of daily living; and physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychological support services all in one dedicated space. *(7/1/25)*



New lab for transplant, specialized testing at Vanderbilt Medical Laboratories

Read the full story by Leigh MacMillan on VUMC News

Transplant matching and other specialized clinical tests are now being conducted by the Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Laboratory (HIL) at Vanderbilt Medical Laboratories. The new laboratory launched its first phase of testing June 26, after 8 years of planning, and ultimately will fully support clinical testing for the Vanderbilt Transplant Center, one of the nation's busiest transplant centers. Transplantation testing was previously performed by outside laboratories; the new system will enable faster turn around and electronic health record integration. *(7/1/25)*



Rapid follow-up to address Emergency Department crowding

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News



Emergency Department (ED) volumes increased 8% during the past year at Vanderbilt University Hospital. In response to increasing ED wait times, VUMC's Department of Emergency Medicine developed a new rapid follow-up program for patients who can be referred safely to outpatient clinics for evaluation and treatment. The program schedules primary care or specialist appointments within three days and waives financial preapproval as well as additional out-of-network costs. More than 700 patients were reffered in the first 12 months of the program. *(6/17/25)*

NICU babies are going home weeks earlier thanks to an iPad

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News



NICU Bridge to Home is a new remote monitoring and telehealth program that supports families transitioning to home from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. 43 patients have enrolled since launching in 2024. Most participants are infants with feeding challenges. The program's goal is to reduce hospital length of stay while maintaining continuity of care through a customized remote monitoring platform and telehealth follow-ups that allow families to navigate caring for their newborn at home. *(8/15/25)*

VUMC's ECMO program sees substantial growth

Read the full story by Matt Batcheldor on VUMC News



VUMC's lifesaving extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) program saw 75% more patients in the 12 month period ending June 2025, more than 190 patients. ECMO is a life-sustaining mechanical system that takes over for the hearts and lungs of critically ill patients, allowing them to rest and recover in the ICU. ECMO is a specialized system not available at all medical centers, and VUMC has received the platinum-level award from the Extracorporeal Life Support Organization (ELSO) for its program, the highest honor possible. Some of the increase is attributed to expansion of VUMC's lung and heart transplant programs, which are now the largest volume lung and heart transplant programs in the world. *(8/4/25)*

Pre-surgery consults with patients using 3D models improve shared decision-making and reduce anxiety

Read the full story by Tom Wilemon on VUMC News



Aimal Khan, MD, assistant professor of Surgery, noticed the puzzled expressions of patients trying to fully comprehend what he was saying during preoperative consultations, so he devised 3D models of the lower digestive tract. Patients could actually see where the surgery would occur, and Khan noticed that they asked more questions, felt more confident and less anxious. He devised a study to determine whether his personal observations were scientifically valid, which was published in *JAMA Network Open*. *(6/9/25)*

PATIENT STORIES

11-year NBA veteran Scot Pollard and the emergency transplant that saved his life

Read the full story by ESPN or watch on ESPN+/Disney+, photo by Donn Jones



VUMC granted ESPN unprecedented access to film former NBA player Scot Pollard's heart transplant. The resulting documentary about Pollard's life journey, "Heart of Pearl," debuted on ESPN on June 15. In early 2024, VUMC's Heart Transplant Program led the complex process of successfully transplanting a new heart for Pollard. The former professional athlete was critically ill with advanced heart failure. *(6/15/25)*

A chance meeting and a compassionate surgeon changed Lainey Mathis' life

Read/watch the full story on The Tennessean, photo by Erin O. Smith



In pain and running out of options, Lainey Mathis worried there might not be anywhere left to turn. But amid her fatigue from years of an intense battle with Chiari malformation, a disorder in which an excess of tissue at the base of the brain blocks the flow of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), she found her way to Vanderbilt Health's new Hydrocephalus, Chiari and CSF Disorders Center. "After everything I've been through, [Dr. Lee] saying 'I'm going to find something to do for you…' that's the first time I ever felt hope," said Mathis. *(8/11/25)*

Camp Hope brings fun, community to children who are burn survivors

Read/watch the full story on News Channel 5, photo credit News Channel 5



Camp Hope is a VUMC-operated summer camp for pediatric burn survivors who have been previously treated at Monroe Carell and VUMC's regional burn center. There is no cost for kids to attend the week-long camp to enjoy summer activities with others who have had similar experiences and challenges. *(7/17/25)*

John White's medical team has spent decades helping him achieve goals in life — and on the soccer field

Read the full story by Evan Dorian on VUMC News



John White, 21, of Birmingham, AL was born with severe Ebstein's anomaly, a congenital heart defect. He has been seen at Monroe Carell for 20 years with multiple heart surgeries. Despite his heart difference, John helped his soccer team win three state championships; thorough medical assessements at Monroe Carell before every season ensured his participation was safe. *(6/26/25)*

Summer day camp in Nashville helping kids who stutter build confidence and more

Read/watch the full story by News Channel 5, photo by WTVF



A summer camp in Nashville is helping children who stutter build confidence and make connections with peers who share similar experiences. Camp T.A.L.K.S. is organized by VUMC's Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences. The week-long camp provides a supportive environment where children who stutter can build community and be themselves. *(6/4/25)*

Turn left for the plan, turn right for the miracle: when triplets couldn't wait for Nashville

Read the full story by Danny Bonvissuto on VUMC News



Even though his wife, Monica, was 26 weeks pregnant with triplets, Greg Barton didn't initially feel a sense of urgency when he received a call from their OB-GYN office that Monica was having contractions. Then he got her one-word text. "Hurry." When Greg got home, Monica was trying desperately not to give birth on the spot. They got in the car with the intention of making the hour-long drive to Nashville, where they had a birth plan at a local hospital. Greg made a split-second decision instead to go to the Vanderbilt Tullahoma-Harton Hospital just 10 minutes away. *(7/31/25)*

Medical team uses nontraditional therapy to help give young patient a chance at making it to heart transplant

Read the full story by Jessica Pasley on VUMC News



Van Sung, a rising eighth grader, was born with a congenital heart defect. Sung had undergone a series of surgeries to repair the flaw, and all was well for more than a decade. In December 2024 her parents noticed facial puffiness and weight gain that was uncharacteristic of their daughter. They learned she was in heart failure. The team at VUMC's Pediatric Heart Institute implanted an innovative ECMO heart pump device to give Sung the best chance of receiving a heart transplant. *(5/28/25)*

From stadium to stents, quick response saves soccer fan

Read the full story by Jill Clendening on VUMC News



Leigh Anne Clark and her husband, Randy, had a great evening planned at GEODIS Park in Nashville to celebrate their 29th wedding anniversary. Everything was perfectly wonderful. Until it wasn't. Shortly into the game, Clark sank to the concrete floor. The on-site Vanderbilt LifeFlight Event Medicine team responded in minutes. She was having a serious heart attack. VUMC's cardiac catheterization lab was ready when she arrived and quickly performed a minimally invasive stent procedure, sparing long-term damage to her heart. *(6/16/25)*

LEADING EDGE RESEARCH

Stand Up to Cancer highlights Nashville talent, Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center

Watch the recorded telecast on YouTube, photo by Jason Kempin



Stand Up to Cancer, a one-hour special promoting life-saving advances in cancer research, and to raise funds for bold research, was broadcast Aug. 15 on multiple national TV networks. Viewers saw performances at the downtown Nashville venue, The Pinnacle, by Sheryl Crow, the Jonas Brothers, Noah Cyrus, Gavin DeGraw, Marcus King, Brothers Osborne, Jon Pardi, Jelly Roll, and more. VICC leaders, scientists, and clinicians were also featured. *(8/18/25)*

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt researcher featured at congressional science fair

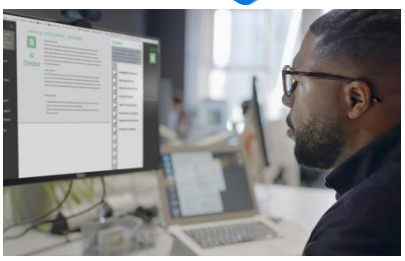
Read the full story by Nick Warren on VUMC News



This June, the Children's Hospital Association hosted a congressional science fair featuring groundbreaking research from six children's hospitals. Representing Monroe Carell was Fred Lamb, MD, PhD, Director of Pediatric Critical Care Medicine. Dr. Lamb cares for kids experiencing serious blood infections, called sepsis, which causes long-term inflammation and increases risks for heart disease in adulthood. His research is trying to figure out how to disrupt these inflammatory processes and mitigate risks for heart disease for kids who survive serious conditions like sepsis. Dr. Lamb's research is funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. *(6/24/25)*

Rating chatbots for reliability in health care

Read the full story on VUMC Discoveries in Medicine



V-CARES is a new AI chatbot rating system, with funding from ARPA-H, to help health care organizations select safer AI tools. Artificial intelligence-driven chatbots are now fielding queries across all aspects of health care, but few safeguards exist if an AI chat bot hallucinates or provides patients inaccurate information. In addition to enhanced transparency for AI models, V-CARES could create market pressure to improve chatbots. *(6/12/25)*

Discrepancies in gestational dating can inform miscarriage risk: study

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News



Researchers at VUMC have developed a more precise way of determining the risk of miscarriage for healthy women who are early in their pregnancies. In a first-of-its-kind study, investigators found that a discrepancy in estimation of gestational age between ultrasound verus last menstrual period predicted higher risk of pregnancy loss; the greater the discrepancy, the greater the likelihood. The study included nearly 5,000 women from Tennessee, North Carolina, and Texas who participate in Right from the Start, a community-based, prospective pregnancy cohort. The study was supported by funding from the National Institute *(8/29/25)*

Healthy plant-based diets reduce risk of death in long-term VUMC study

Read the full story by Guillermo Sanchez on VUMC News



A recent article in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition analyzed the association of plant-based diets with mortality in over 77,000 participants followed for an average of 17 years. The health impacts of plant-based diets varied based on the quality of plant-based foods participants ate; participants who ate the most whole grains, whole fruits, and vegetables had an 18% lower risk of all-cause mortality during the study, while participants who consumed the most refined grains, potatoes, and fruit juices had a 17% increased risk of all-cause mortality. This study was funded by the National Cancer Institute. *(8/7/25)*

VUMC-led research a step closer to understanding, preventing asthma

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News



Infants who develop a "wheezing illness" or have been infected by respiratory syncytial virus before their 1st birthday are at increased risk for subsequent and severe viral infections and childhood asthma, according to a new VUMC-led study. The study followed 2,000 children born between 2012-2014 and found differences in how lung cells develop after a respiratory infection during infancy. This study was made possible by funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. *(6/17/25)*

Study unravels the neurobiological mechanism of psychomotor disturbance in psychiatric disorders

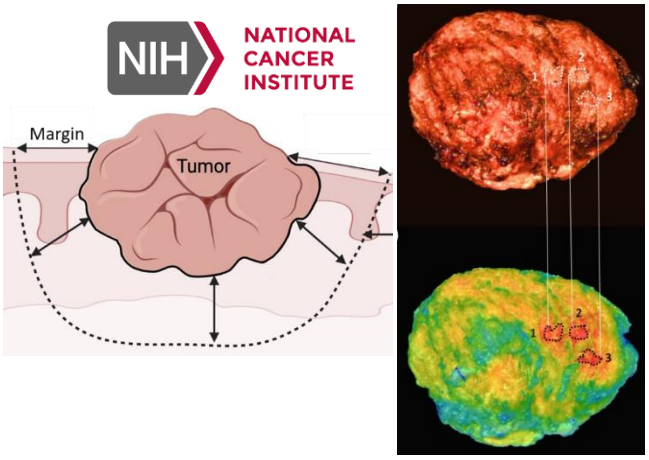
Read the full story by Danny Bonvissuto on VUMC News



New research in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* reveals how psychiatric conditions impact muscle function by disrupting connections in the brain. The 206-person study focused on grip strength to measure motor function, because it has previously been associated with overall well-being and all-cause mortality. Separate clinical trials at VUMC are investigating whether brain connectivity could be improved for patients with psychosis by noninvasive transcranial magnetic stimulation. Funding from the National Institute of Mental Health supported this study. *(6/25/25)*

Data from fluorescence imaging can improve outcomes in head and neck cancer surgery: study

Read the full story by Evan Dorian on VUMC News



A study published in *JAMA Surgery* demonstrated the benefits of fluorescence-guided imaging to help surgeons remove head and neck tumors with better accuracy and reduce damage to healthy tissue. Microscopic cancer cells often infiltrate surrounding healthy tissue and can be left behind, so surgeons often remove some healthy tissue and inspect the "margin." Fluorescence-guided imaging makes tumor cells glow both during and after surgery, improving precision and confidence. This study was supported by the National Cancer Institute. *(6/23/25)*

Brain white matter abnormalities affect cognition and impact Alzheimer's disease development: study

Read the full story by Stephanie Bryan on VUMC News



There is a significant association between changes in the brain's white matter microstructure and cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease (AD), according to a study in *JAMA Neurology*. Data collected from nine different cohorts and a total of 4,467 participants via magnetic resonance imaging, positron emission tomography, and thousands of neuropsychological assessments revealed that microstructure changes work together with other AD risk factors to predict even more rapid cognitive decline. The National Institute on Aging provided funding for this study. *(6/17/25)*

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Vanderbilt team makes house calls for patients without homes

Read the full story by Robb Coles at NewsChannel 5



Vanderbilt's Homeless Health Services team makes weekly house calls to unhoused patients, providing follow-up care to approximately 2,000 people treated annually in VUMC emergency departments.

Once a week the team heads out to different spots where unhoused people may be sheltering to offer follow-up care to people who've been treated at VUMC. "What we're trying to do is intervene and meet the patient where they're at so that we can make sure that their care is continuing as it would for any other patient," said Dr. Chase Palisch. *(9/5/25)*

High school researchers at VUMC glimpse the future

Read the full story by Bill Snyder on VUMC News



For six weeks this summer, high school students from throughout the southern and eastern US donned white lab coats in VUMC laboratories to discover something new. They were part of the Aspirnaut program, which prepares high school and college students, primarily from rural areas, for careers in the STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Since 2006, the program has provided hands-on research experience for 380 students, and nearly 80% have pursued an advanced STEM degree or joined the STEM workforce. *(7/31/25)*

Neonatal resuscitation initiative: first responders learn lifesaving techniques

Read the full story by Kylie Avery on VUMC News



During a week of training at the Monroe Carell, 493 paramedics and emergency medical technicians were trained in neonatal resuscitation practices. Emergency medical service (EMS) personnel are increasingly involved in deliveries in Tennessee, often without the necessary training to support newborns in taking their first crucial breaths. Recognizing the gap, Monroe Carell created a training program with support from the Tennessee Department of Health and TennCare. Within one year, the percentage of EMS providers in middle Tennessee certified for neonatal resuscitation increased from 3% to 33%. *(6/12/25)*

Tennessee grant ensures continued visual services for students through Project PAVE

Read the full story Holly Fletcher on VUMC News



This summer, the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging awarded $335,000 to the Vanderbilt Eye Institute (VEI) to continue vital services for students with visual impairments. Project PAVE (Providing Access to the Visual Environment) was established in 1993 as a collaborative program between the Tennessee Department of Education, Lions Clubs of Tennessee and Vanderbilt. The program has been housed at VEI for over 20 years and has served more than 2,500 children across Tennessee, providing comprehensive low vision evaluations, prescribed optical devices and specialized training at no cost to eligible families. *(8/20/25)*

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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