Mountain States Health Alliance and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center Strategic Affiliation

Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) and the Mountain States Health Alliance (MSHA) finalized their agreement in May 2013. As part of the affiliation agreement, VUMC will assist with recruitment of hard-to-find specialists and subspecialists to serve the Northeast Tennessee/Southwest Virginia area. VUMC also brings to the table a number of evidence-based care models that will help MSHA to enhance the care of patients with certain diagnoses such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma.

An internationally renowned research institution, VUMC will also bring to MSHA’s service area a number of clinical trials that have the potential to benefit patients while making significant advances in medical research. The two medical networks share the goal of improving services while reducing costs. As nonprofit organizations, they pursue a common mission to provide the highest-quality care for broad and diverse patient populations. The collaborative relationship between MSHA and VUMC is expected to grow and strengthen in future years as each organization finds new ways to provide better care through cooperation.

Vanderbilt Heart Johnson City

Vanderbilt Heart uses advanced therapies and technologies and a world-class care team to provide patients with extremely high quality cardiovascular care. While fully integrated into the Vanderbilt University Medical Center and its patient care, research and teaching missions, Vanderbilt Heart also has nearly two dozen clinics across Tennessee and Kentucky. This means that at Vanderbilt Heart Johnson City, residents of the 1st Congressional District are able to access some of the most advanced cardiovascular care available anywhere—right in their own community.

*The Pathfinder Hotline is a statewide multi-language help line that connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and information
Southern Community Cohort Study

The Southern Community Cohort Study (SCCS), funded by the National Cancer Institute provides researchers with a better understanding of why certain groups such as African Americans, the poor, or those living in particular geographical areas, experience disproportionately high rates of certain diseases including cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. This cohort study, led by researchers at Vanderbilt University, Meharry Medical College, and the International Epidemiology Institute, has involved 86,000 patients since its inception in 2001. The study is located in Rogersville, Tennessee.

- Based on data from the SCCS, Vanderbilt researchers concluded that health disparities between white and black adults in the South are not connected to a lack of exercise but are more likely related to other factors such as access to health care, socioeconomic status, and possibly genetics.

- With data collected from the SCCS, it was determined that people who smoke mentholated cigarettes are no more likely to develop lung cancer or die from the disease than are smokers of non-mentholated brands.

- In 2013, Vanderbilt research scientist Melinda Aldrich, Ph.D., M.P.H., was awarded a National Institutes of Health Academic Career Award to investigate some of the genetic secrets behind a greater risk of lung cancer among African Americans compared with other racial and ethnic groups. To accomplish this task, Aldrich will study African Americans from two existing epidemiology studies—the African American Lung Cancer Consortium and the SCCS.

“[Dr. Aldrich’s] work will have a significant impact on our understanding of lung cancer development at the individual patient level and is likely to provide clues for better treatment and counseling.”

—Joe B. (Bill) Putnam, Jr., M.D., Chair of Thoracic Surgery

For more information, please contact Vanderbilt’s Office of Federal Relations:

Christina West (202) 216-4370 • Alex Currie (202) 216-4366 • Margie Glick (202) 216-4368

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