

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Neuroscientist Receives Grant
to Study Resilience of Brain to Mental Illness**

LITTLE ROCK – A University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) research scientist has been awarded a \$409,750 grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to lead a study investigating ways the brain develops resilience to mental illnesses like addiction.

Andrew James, Ph.D., an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine’s Department of Psychiatry, is the principal investigator in the two-year study, which will use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to examine patterns of brain organization in adult subjects who experienced childhood trauma.

James and his research team will conduct a series of cognitive tests on the subjects while they undergo an MRI scan in an attempt to determine the different ways males and females adapt to traumatic experiences.

The study is a follow-up to research initiated in 2014 by James and Clint Kilts, Ph.D., director of the Brain Imaging Research Center, which demonstrated how childhood trauma may lead to addiction.

“We know from our previous research that adults who experienced childhood trauma and didn’t become addicted to drugs or alcohol had a unique brain organization compared to those who did become addicted,” said James. “We hope this study will help us determine the role gender plays in these trauma outcomes.”

James’ study will also involve subjects from a previous research trial pertaining to trauma and adolescent girls. James will be following up with former participants to determine the long-term effects of trauma.

“We’re going to be studying 40 girls with varying trauma histories. They were 12 to 16 years of age when they first participated in our research study,” said James, who will be testing the subjects’ motor skills and attention control in the MRI scanner and comparing

their results to earlier data. “We’re interested in whether or not they developed an addiction to drugs. Were their brains born resilient or did they learn resilience?”

For information about the study, contact the Brain Imaging Research Center at (501) 420-2653.

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a northwest Arkansas regional campus; a statewide network of regional centers; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, the Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, the Myeloma Institute, the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, the Psychiatric Research Institute, the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and the Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,870 students, 799 medical residents and six dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including about 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS and its regional campuses throughout the state, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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