Atkinson To Receive Weintraub Award

Robert P. Atkinson, President and CEO of Jefferson Regional Medical Center (JRMC) in Pine Bluff, will receive the Arkansas Hospital Association’s (AHA) A. Allen Weintraub Memorial Award during the association’s 78th Annual Meeting, to be held October 8-10 at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock. The AHA Board of Directors selected Atkinson as the award recipient during its August 8 meeting.

Atkinson, who previously had served in administrative positions with hospitals in Alabama and Louisiana, joined JRMC as CEO in 1992. He made an immediate impact, improving the financial health of the hospital by turning a $2 million operating loss into a $1.3 million surplus in his first year and by implementing new services and expanding existing technology. Over the next few years, the hospital added new cardiology and cardiovascular services, an inpatient rehabilitation center and a transitional care unit, and expanded JRMC’s Davis Life Care Center by 60 beds.

During his tenure, he has overseen the opening of the Donald W. Reynolds South Central Center on Aging; a state-of-the-art, comprehensive Arkansas Cancer Institute; a new three-story medical office complex; and the first inpatient hospice facility in southeast Arkansas, as well as the area’s first long-term acute care hospital. Other successes include recruiting more than 150 physicians to the area with specialties ranging from endocrinology to cardiovascular surgery; introducing JRMC’s Hospitalist program to Southeast Arkansas and implementing a surgical residency program. Additionally, Atkinson introduced cutting-edge technology and medical services, including a 64 Slice CT Scanner, the Anterior Approach for Minimally Invasive Hip Replacement Surgery and Diamondback 360 vascular procedure.

He was instrumental in Pine Bluff becoming the first Heart Safe Community in Arkansas through the AED Grant Program, which has placed more than 100 automated external defibrillators in local businesses, churches and civic organizations, with JRMC paying half the cost of each unit. Atkinson also is an active community leader, having served on the boards of the Jefferson County Industrial Foundation (chairman), the Bioplex Committee, Alliance Military Affairs Committee, Fifty for the Future, Southeast College Advisory Council, Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club of Pine Bluff (former president).

Atkinson has served as a member of the AHA Board of Directors since 1996 and currently sits as the board’s past-chairman. He is a past chairman of the Southeast Hospital District, serves as Arkansas’ alternate delegate to the American Hospital Association’s Regional Policy Board 7, is a member of the UAMS Regional Programs and is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

The Weintraub Award, named for the late administrator of St. Vincent Infirmary Medical Center in Little Rock, is presented each year to recognize a hospital chief executive officer who exemplifies the qualities of character, leadership, visionary influence and duty to community for which Weintraub was so appreciated and admired. It is the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the AHA.
AHA Names Distinguished Service Honorees

Each year, the Arkansas Hospital Association (AHA) recognizes an individual who, while not necessarily an AHA member, has made noteworthy contributions to better the cause of community health and the healthcare delivery system in Arkansas. For 2008, the AHA will recognize two such deserving people, both physicians, whose work has benefited patients, community and the state in equally important but differing ways. The AHA Board of Directors voted on August 8 to honor Charles Daniel, MD, a Marshall, Arkansas physician, and I. Dodd Wilson, MD, outgoing Chancellor of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, by bestowing on them AHA’s Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Daniel has served for more than 40 years as the physician and medical director of the Marshall Family Practice, a rural health clinic subsidiary of North Arkansas Regional Medical Center in Harrison. A graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, he is the Searcy County health officer and consults with hospitals in Magnolia, Batesville and Mountain View. In addition to being a longtime key healthcare provider in the North Central Arkansas community, Dr. Daniel is a member of the Marshall Rotary Club; the Searcy County Economic Development Commission, from which he received the Citizen of the Year Award in 2007; and the Searcy County Chamber of Commerce. He was responsible for obtaining necessary approval and funding for the Marshall Civic Center and received the Marshall High School Distinguished Service Award for his service to the community.

Dr. Wilson has been the UAMS Chancellor since October 2000 and will be retiring from that position next year. Prior to his selection as chancellor, he served as Dean of the College of Medicine at UAMS for 14 years and was Vice-Chairman and Professor of Medicine at University of Minnesota Medical School before arriving in Arkansas in 1986.

His efforts to expand the state’s healthcare workforce to address predictions of unmet needs in the future have resulted in a new education building to provide facilities to an expanding group of students in each discipline, a new student housing facility and an emerging satellite campus in Northwest Arkansas. Under Dr. Wilson’s direction, the total class size at UAMS has grown from 1,855 in 2000 to 2,538 last year and is expected to reach almost 3,000 by 2010.

Under Dr. Wilson’s leadership, UAMS has implemented or completed more than $460 million in construction projects to improve its clinical facilities; expanded its cancer care facilities to allow patients to receive treatment and obtain access to clinical trials; and is nearing the final stage of developing a new Psychiatric Research Institute. Other accomplishments during his watch include the strengthening of UAMS Regional Programs and creation of the UAMS Center for Distance Health. He also has encouraged entrepreneurial spirit of the talented physicians and scientists, seeing the growth and success of six institutes, UAMS Bioventures, the Arkansas Biosciences Institute and the Biomedical Research complex.

The awards will be presented during the AHA Awards Dinner at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock on the night of Thursday, October 9.

Keynoter: Facing Life’s Unexpected Changes

Lee Woodruff, contributing editor to ABC’s “Good Morning, America,” will keynote the Arkansas Hospital Association’s 78th Annual Meeting October 8-10 at The Peabody Little Rock. As co-author of In An Instant, the #1 New York Times best seller, Woodruff recounts her story of a marriage, a family, a crisis and a healing. When her husband, ABC’s newly-appointed co-anchor Bob Woodruff, was hit by a roadside bomb while covering the war in Iraq, her life changed
immediately. She had to learn to put her own grief aside to care for her children, as well as her husband, who was gravely injured and close to death.

Above and beyond their own incredible personal ordeal, the Woodruffs made the decision to help others, founding the Bob Woodruff Family Fund for Traumatic Brain Injury “to raise money to assist members of the military with cognitive rehabilitation and other care needs following traumatic brain injury suffered in service to their country.” Programming information is now available by clicking on http://www.arkhospitals.org/calendarannual.htm. Please call (501) 224-7878 for a brochure to be mailed to you.

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**Tamper Resistant Rx Pads Required October 1**

The Arkansas Department of Human Services issued an August 7 notice to healthcare providers about the upcoming October 1, 2008 deadline that all fee-for-service Medicaid prescriptions which are either handwritten or printed from an EMR/ePrescribing application must contain at least one feature from each of the three categories of tamper resistance. Previous compliance as of April 1, 2008 required only one feature from one category of tamper resistance, so complying with the instructions for October may include additional requirements from a prescription pad or software vendor.

Prior guidance for printed prescriptions generated from EMRs or ePrescribing applications stated that special copy resistant paper would likely be required for printed prescriptions as of October 1, 2008. CMS has since clarified its position and is now stating that while special paper may be used to achieve copy resistance – it is not necessary. EMR or ePrescribing-generated prescriptions may be printed on plain paper and be fully compliant with all three categories of tamper resistance, provided they contain at least one feature from each of the three categories detailed in the notice. For more information on the Medicaid Tamper Resistant Requirement Guidance, see https://www.medicaid.state.ar.us/Download/provider/amprcd/searcharea/OfficialNotices/DMS-08-A-9.pdf.

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**AHA Workshop for Administrative Professionals**

Change and transition are constant companions to all administrative professionals and no one escapes the professional and personal challenges they bring. On September 18, the Arkansas Hospital Association (AHA) will present “Strategies for Administrative Professionals,” a workshop that will provide an opportunity for participants to review their personal orientation to the realities of change and transition and to adopt a healthier mindset toward it. Healthcare consultant Vic Walton will facilitate the program, which also will explore ethical decision-making and suggest a personal style of choice in order to survive and flourish in these turbulent times. He will help define how a truly valued professional is capable of making a positive difference in fulfilling organizational goals. Walton also is the lead presenter for the AHA’s Mid-Management Certificate Series.

In addition to Walton’s program, AHA staffers Paul Cunningham, Elisa White and Beth Ingram will offer an update on current healthcare hot topics including new privacy legislation, as well as information on the AHA’s membership services. Please click on www.arkhospitals.org/calendar.htm for a workshop brochure and registration information.

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**Rabies Vaccine In Short Supply**

Novartis Vaccines recently notified customers throughout the country of a shortage of its RabAvert® (Rabies Vaccine for Human use). Sanofi, another manufacturer, is completely out of rabies vaccine, leaving Novartis as the sole source. Due to the shortage, the vaccine is being made available for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) use only and Novartis has established a special procedure for obtaining supplies. The process requires that providers obtain approval through the Rabies State Health Official. Upon contacting the state official, customers will receive a confirmation code password which will be required to place an order for the vaccine with Novartis.

Susan Weinstein, DVM, State Public Health Veterinarian, informed the Arkansas Hospital Association last Friday about Novartis’ new rules covering the rabies vaccine orders. She added that risk assessment by local/state health departments will be required in order to provide the password to the ordering provider. Due to the increased usage of RabAvert® and no more Imovax available from Sanofi, this measure is required to help slow the usage rate and minimize inappropriate PEP. Dr. Weinstein said that the need to begin rabies prophylaxis immediately at the time of patient presentation is rare (facial animal bites are the possible exception) and there should be time to evaluate the necessity for prophylaxis before administration begins.

To secure a password, please call the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and ask for either Dr. Susan Weinstein, the point of contact for Arkansas (501-280-4136) or the physician on call. The phone numbers for the health department are (501) 661-2000 or (800) 462-0599. For emergency assistance call (800) 633-1735. When a password is obtained, to order RabAvert®, call the Novartis main customer service line at (800) 244-7668. There is an option available of leaving a message (even outside of normal business hours). Or, try the customer service e-mail address: Vaccines.cs@novartis.com. Several providers have experienced difficulty contacting Novartis to order vaccine but hopefully these routes will work.

Because Sanofi can no longer provide Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PreEP) vaccine for higher risk occupations, arrangements will be made so that Novartis will supply the PreEP vaccine for higher risk occupations, but there may be a long delays with getting PreEP as the switch over to Novartis is completed. The ADH Web site contains more information about rabies at [http://www.healthyarkansas.com/services/rabies_main.htm](http://www.healthyarkansas.com/services/rabies_main.htm). Additional information related to the current rabies vaccine supply will be updated on the CDC Rabies Web site at: [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies).

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**Rule Contains EMTALA “Community Plan Guidance”**

The final regulations for the Medicare inpatient prospective payment system final rule for FY09 provide long-awaited clarification and guidance for hospital on-call requirements under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) as it relates to community call plans. Under the final rule, a community plan is defined as two or more hospitals that coordinate on-call coverage within a specific geographic area. Hospitals participating in such plans must designate the facility that will offer specific coverage; the other participating hospitals would then transfer patients requiring the designated care to that facility. Hospitals are also required to establish the time period this coordinated on-call coverage is in effect.

The rule also requires hospitals to develop a formal plan that includes a clear delineation of on-call responsibilities for each hospital participating in the plan, a description of the geographic area covered by the plan, and an annual assessment of the plan by participating hospitals. Download the final rule at [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AcuteInpatientPPS/downloads/CMS-1390-F.pdf](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AcuteInpatientPPS/downloads/CMS-1390-F.pdf).
**Legal Note: AHLA Offers Public Health Resource**

The American Health Lawyers Association (AHLA) publishes a Public Information Series, which is a collection of free, consumer-friendly guidebooks and resources that share AHLA members’ expertise on topics of interest to the healthcare community and the general public.

The newest publication in this series is *Community Pan-Flu Preparedness: A Checklist of Key Legal Issues for Healthcare Providers*. This excellent publication, which was co-sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, contains information from numerous professionals regarding legal impediments, gaps, and implementation challenges in the event of a pandemic or other such wide-scale disaster. A free PDF copy of the publication may be downloaded at [www.healthlawyers.org/panfluchecklist](http://www.healthlawyers.org/panfluchecklist). Additional publications in the Public Information Series also may be downloaded free of charge at [www.healthlawyers.org/publicinterest/piseries](http://www.healthlawyers.org/publicinterest/piseries).

*Suggested topics for the Legal Note may be submitted to elisawhite@arkhospitals.org. The Legal Note is provided solely for informational purpose and does not constitute legal advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with their own attorneys about any legal issues, including those discussed in this article.*

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**NewsNotes About Arkansas Folks**

W. Douglas Arnold has been named chief executive officer of Northwest Health System in Springdale. He succeeds Dan McKay who was serving in an interim capacity since the resignation of Gary Looper in March. Arnold has 33 years in the healthcare industry, most recently serving as CEO at Midwest Regional Medical Center in Midwest City, Oklahoma. He also served in administrative capacities at hospitals in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama. Northwest Health System operates three hospitals and several clinics in Washington and Benton Counties and is owned by Community Health Systems of Brentwood, Tennessee.

Rick Newton has been named interim CEO/Managing Director of Rivendell Behavioral Health Services in Benton. He succeeds Scott Williams who has accepted a similar position with Vista Health. Newton has been with Rivendell for 11 years serving as director of adult services, adolescent residential services and case management/utilization review/special projects.

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**The AHACalendar**

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Final Thoughts by Paul Cunningham

Having a university that is part of the Southeastern Conference, arguably the best football family in the country, is a source of pride for us Arkansans. That’s especially true whenever a new season is literally ready for kick-off. Hope always springs eternal in August, regardless of predictions.

On any given Saturday during any given Fall, folks who live here, and in Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky and South Carolina, get the chance to watch the strongest, fittest, fastest, most skilled athletes take to the gridiron in an effort to run, pass, block, tackle and kick their way to the BCS championship. Unwilling to settle for second place in any phase of the game, too many fans in those nine states apparently also compete head-to-head in some Olympic style power-tailgating before squeezing into the narrow seats in their stadiums of choice. Fun, yes, but there’s a price to pay.

News last week from the Trust for America’s Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is that seven of the nine states which have Southeastern Conference ties are among the top ten states with the most obese populations. If there is any good news for Arkansas in the fifth annual *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America, 2008* report, it’s that we’re not quite the heftiest population in the U.S.

Despite all of our other health hurdles so often cited in one national study or another, Arkansas ranked as only the 8th most obese state in America. Still the bottom quartile, but being ahead of usual conference pace-setters must count for something to real fans.

According to the report, 28.1% of the people in Arkansas are obese. However, we scored better than Nos. 1. Mississippi (31.7%); 3. Alabama (30.1%); 4. Louisiana (29.5%); 5. South Carolina (29.2%); 6. Tennessee (29%); and 7. Kentucky (28.4%). Big East powerhouse West Virginia (30.6%) occupied second place, while perennial championship contenders Oklahoma (tied with Arkansas at 8, 28.1%) and Michigan (10, 27.7%) rounded out the top (bottom?) ten. (Unfortunately, those danged Longhorns topped us again, ranking 15th worst at 27.2%. Yet another reason for Arkansans to love God and hate Texas.)

As is often the case, Georgia and Florida surpassed all other SEC rivals. Georgia eked off of the 10-worst list by registering an 11th-place finish with a 27.5% obesity rate, while those run and gun Floridians outpaced the rest and weighed in at 23.3%, good for 38th place. Colorado, where only 18.4% of the population is obese, is by far the leanest of states. Must be the mountain air.

All kidding aside, the report is a sobering reminder of perhaps the most pervasive long-term threat to the overall health of the U.S. and a worrisome issue for the healthcare system. The report says that roughly 66% of Americans, including 23 million children, are overweight or obese. To make matters worse, adult obesity rates rose in 37 states in the past year. Rates rose for a second consecutive year in 24 states and for a third consecutive year in 19 states. No state saw a decrease.

If things don’t change soon, we can expect to deal with a daunting health crisis spurred-on by the consequences of chronic health problems that stem from obesity. Type-2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood triglycerides, high blood pressure and stroke are much more likely to occur as a result of obesity, which also raises the risk of certain types of cancer and related deaths.

Studies show that obesity increases the risk of Alzheimer’s-type dementia and also leads to other chronic problems like gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, gout, joint pain and sleep apnea, as well as emotional, psychological and social problems. The spillover destined to effect every American is the residual higher healthcare costs. Medical costs for people with chronic conditions are six times more per year than healthy people pay and individuals with a functional limitation in addition to a chronic condition spend 16 times more on healthcare services.

The report concludes with a recommendation that the country set a national goal of reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015. Arkansas already has something to build on. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement’s Body Mass Index program has succeeded in stemming the growth of childhood obesity for now. Maybe we could share the secrets of our success with the likes of Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama and our other SEC pals. And, yes, we ought to include Texas, too. Just because we’d like our neighbors to the southwest to be a healthy lot doesn’t mean we have to wish them well on the football field………..EVER.