The Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program is an integral component of Regional Programs at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Unlike the other UAMS programs, the AHECs are all off-campus, established in eight regions of the state. They are administered from centers located in Fort Smith, Pine Bluff, El Dorado, Fayetteville, Batesville, Jonesboro, Texarkana and Helena.

Since its inception in 1973, the program has focused principally on the state’s primary health care needs, particularly in the medically underserved areas. The program includes efforts to retain more graduates of the state’s College of Medicine for practice in Arkansas; to train more primary care physicians, particularly family physicians, for the state; and to improve the geographic distribution of these physicians throughout the state.

Included within an AHEC are full-time and part-time faculty, including private practice physicians from the community, affiliated hospitals, an ambulatory family medical center, other health care facilities, a medical library linked with the UAMS library at Little Rock and an administrative and technical staff.

Each AHEC director has responsibility for developing and administering the educational programs within his/her respective AHEC. All educational programs conducted at AHECs are coordinated and monitored by the central AHEC office at UAMS.

Medical school courses within the AHECs are both elective and required. Senior medical students may complete their required 4-week primary care selective and 4-week acting internship in family medicine, pediatrics and internal medicine at any of the seven AHECs. In addition, electives in a wide variety of specialties are available. Junior medical students are required to complete a 4-week clerkship in family medicine with six of the AHECs used as training sites. Two-way interactive video equipment at the AHECs is utilized for orientation on the first day of each family medicine junior clerkship rotation. Each student works under the supervision of AHEC faculty.

Educational opportunities provided through AHECs include: involvement in primary specialized medical care within a community and away from the main campus; experiences designed to allow students the freedom to choose programs that supplement their prior training and best suit their career goals; and demonstration of comprehensive and continuous patient care in a private practice setting.

AHEC program objectives and activities include:

- The establishment and operation of a system of AHEC medical libraries at each of the seven locations, linked with the UAMS Medical Library at Little Rock and to the National Library of Medicine in Washington, D.C.
- The administration and supervision of the AHEC/College of Medicine’s Rural Preceptorship program for entering second and third-year medical students.
- The provision of junior clerkships in family medicine at each AHEC.
- The provision of clinical rotations for senior medical students in each AHEC.
- The development and operation of six accredited family medicine residency training programs.
- The provision of clinical training in the AHECs for students of nursing, pharmacy, public health and the health related professions.
The provision of continuing education programs for practicing physicians and other health care providers throughout the state.

Fully accredited Family Medicine Residency Programs are in operation at six AHECs. Residents in other specialties may rotate from the Little Rock Campus to the AHECs. Within each AHEC there is a weekly schedule of teaching conferences, with regular participation by AHEC faculty and visiting faculty from UAMS and other universities.

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The mission of the UAMS College of Medicine Office of Continuing Medical Education (OCME) is to assist physicians in their pursuit of life-long learning for the purpose of providing high quality health care.

The OCME implements its mission by serving all departments and centers within the College to plan and certify continuing medical education activities for physicians within UAMS, the State of Arkansas, and the region. The UAMS College of Medicine is accredited by the Accreditation Council on Continuing Medical Education to sponsor CME for physicians. A list of upcoming CME activities sponsored by the OCME can be