

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PNW Research Institutes Awarded \$2.5 Million in Federal Funds to Advance Health Equity through Research with Rural Primary Care Practices

ITHS and OCTRI and their affiliated primary care practice-based research networks, WPRN and ORPRN, will make up new northwest Research Hub

(SEATTLE, WA – PORTLAND, OR) The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced a significant award to create a primary care research hub for research-to-clinic connectivity in the Pacific Northwest. The vision is to accelerate research advancement for adoption into every day clinical care, improving health outcomes and advancing health equity.

The \$2.5 million award brings together two stellar networks that have been advancing clinical research in primary care settings, the [Oregon Rural Practice-based Research Network \(ORPRN\)](#) at Oregon Health & Science University, and the [WWAMI region \(Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho\) Practice and Research Network \(WPRN\)](#), supported by the Institute of Translational Health Sciences (ITHS) and UW Family Medicine.

This also marks a new collaboration between the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program hubs, [Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute \(OCTRI\)](#) at [Oregon Health & Science University](#) (OHSU), and the [Institute of Translational Health Sciences \(ITHS\)](#) at the University of Washington.

Together they are creating the Primary Care Rural and Frontier Clinical Trials Innovation Center to Advance Health Equity (PRaCTICE) Network Research Hub (NRH).

- They now become a primary care Research Network Hub, one of 3 across the United States funded by this new award.
- These hubs will implement innovative study designs that address common health issues, including disease prevention.
- They will also prioritize sustained engagement with rural communities and primary care practices that are traditionally underrepresented in clinical research.

In its first year, PRaCTICE will support two NIH funded studies, BeatPain Utah, a remote physical therapy and pain education intervention targeted at rural federally qualified health centers, and Co-Care, which is a collaborative care model for polysubstance use disorder.

In addition, PRaCTICE will enhance its existing engagement infrastructure with practices and communities across WWAMI and Oregon. Engagement activities to collaboratively develop research priorities and future studies include 5 components: 1) PRaCTICE Advisory Board, 2) Regional Engagement Specialists, 3) Community Health Needs Assessments, 4) Regional Listening Sessions, and 5) Annual All-Team Meeting. These activities will allow PRaCTICE to collaboratively develop future research studies that matter to practices and communities in the WWAMI/Oregon region.

Melinda Davis, PhD, MCR, director of ORPRN and the OCTRI Community and Collaboration Core, will lead the overall collaboration. Allison Cole, MD, MPH, director of WPRN and co-director of the ITHS Community Engagement Module, and Sebastian Tong, MD, MPH, associate director of WPRN and a co-investigator in the ITHS Community Engagement Module, will oversee activities in WWAMI.

The goal is to implement a sustained infrastructure that integrates innovative research with routine clinical care in real world settings with communities that are traditionally underrepresented in clinical research.

“We eagerly anticipate collaborating with our local partners – primary care providers and patient communities – to tackle the health challenges they identify as most pressing,” said NIH Director Dr. Monica M. Bertagnolli. “These awards will lay the groundwork for primary care-focused clinical research, creating opportunities for people to engage in research that matters to them right where they receive their care.”

Earlier this year, the NIH launched the **National Institutes of Health Communities Advancing Research Equity for Health™ (CARE for Health™)** program to connect cutting-edge research opportunities to primary care settings. This first year of funding will be used to establish three new Research Network Hubs to conduct research in primary care settings. These awards will mark the first hubs in a growing network that will address barriers to access to clinical research participation and adoption of research findings in everyday clinical care.

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ABOUT WPRN:

The ITHS WWAMI Practice and Research Network (WPRN) is a collaboration of primary care clinics across Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho that facilitates community-based research. It serves as a platform for translating scientific discoveries into practical applications within real-world clinical settings. Through partnerships between academic researchers and community clinicians, the WPRN focuses on addressing health challenges specific to the populations it serves, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

By conducting pragmatic clinical trials and supporting practice-based research, the WPRN helps to develop and test innovations in healthcare delivery, chronic disease management, and patient care. The network also builds research capacity in community clinics, ensuring they have the infrastructure to participate in meaningful studies that directly impact public health outcomes. This aligns with the broader mission of the Institute of Translational Health Sciences (ITHS) to move research from the lab into clinical practice and community health.

ABOUT ORPRN:

The Oregon Rural Practice-based Research Network (ORPRN) was established in 2002 at Oregon Health & Science University. ORPRN's mission is to improve health and equity for all Oregonians through community partnered research, education, and policy. ORPRN's work is anchored around primary care and includes health care research, quality improvement projects, and practice transformation efforts. The network engages with clinics in rural Oregon and across the state. In 2017, ORPRN created the Oregon ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) Network (OEN), a statewide tele mentoring platform for teaching community providers to deliver best-practice medical services. ORPRN's health policy implementation division provides consultation, technical assistance, and educational programs to advance health equity for vulnerable populations. ORPRN is committed to building and sustaining a diverse, equitable, inclusive and anti-racist organization. We do so by evaluating how we develop and support our workforce, the partnerships we uphold and how we engage in our work throughout Oregon.