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HD Nursing Shines Light on Falls Management

By [Mark Carter](#), 10/6/2014 12:00:00 AM



HD Nursing was born out of the BioVentures incubator program at UAMS in Little Rock.

Amy Hester and Dees Davis, nurses at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, recognized a need within the health care industry that wasn't being, well, properly recognized.

Four years ago, Hester and Davis began to develop a method of monitoring — and helping prevent — patient falls and subsequent injuries at health care and rehabilitation facilities. The Hester Davis Scale they created scientifically assesses patient fall risks, and through continued development at UAMS has become an important falls management tool that signed its first official client this year.

The science behind the method was "commercialized" through the [BioVentures](#) incubator program at UAMS, and [HD Nursing](#), an [Innovate Arkansas](#) client startup, was born.

Hester said she and Davis spent hundreds of hours researching literature about falls and previous fall events to lay the foundation for their prediction scale.

"We then spent over three years remodeling and statistically validating what eventually became the Hester Davis Scale," she said, noting that it's traditional for such scales to be named after their developers.

In addition to the scale, HD offers evidence-based care planning, patient and family education, nursing competency and performance improvement.

Hester cited statistics that make falls management a significant component of health care: Falls are the most common and costly of all adverse events reported in hospitals; the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services does not reimburse hospitals for injuries resulting from falls; there are 11,000 fatal falls in U.S. hospitals annually; fractures are the most common fall-related injury, occurring in 33 percent of nonfatal falls; and by the year 2020, the annual financial impact of falls is expected to be \$47 billion annually.

HD Nursing's clients include White River Medical Center in Batesville, which served as the firm's beta testing site, and the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Hester said HD is finalizing a second contract with another major medical center in the Southeast and is working with other hospitals, currently in trials or various stages of contracting.

HD's largest client, though, is not a hospital or a rehab center but electronic medical records supplier Epic. Based in Wisconsin but with offices across the globe, Epic provides electronic medical records to more than 80 percent of academic medical centers across the U.S. In March, it contracted with HD to make the Hester Davis Scale the default fall risk assessment tool for its foundation system.

Hester said the relationship with Epic positions HD to impact more than 65 million patients and Epic clients in the United States, Canada, Singapore, New Zealand and the Netherlands.

Plus, HD has a partnership with Universal Hospital Services to provide the clinical portion of its Falls 360 Solution program.

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"That partnership pairs the scientific engine of HD Nursing with the logistical and clinical resources of UHS, which reach across the country," Hester said. "This partnership gives HD Nursing the national infrastructure and footprint that otherwise would have taken years to develop on our own."

Hester said HD plans to expand its client base to other falls management stakeholders including hospital liability carriers, insurance companies, general practitioners and retail health care providers.

"As we continue to build our falls management solution into the hospital setting, our research and development has shifted to the community and outpatient care," she said. "In the future, our clients will be limitless and our science will reach into the home."

Hester expects to add 15 to 20 Arkansas employees in the next two years. For now, HD Nursing is Hester, chief scientific officer; Davis, chief nursing officer; and CEO Gary Platzman, a former health care executive and startup founder who is based in California.

Hester credited Michael Douglas, former director of BioVentures, with convincing her that she and Davis were onto something big — something that could help people and turn a profit.

"We had lots of challenges," she said. "The first was getting past ourselves. As nurses, we are very altruistic by nature. We were initially just happy anyone was interested in our work and wanted to publish it. Dr. Douglas finally convinced us that hospitals did not want our work because it helped people. They would want it because it would save them money. We knew the thousands of hours we had dedicated to our program, and we also knew that kind of free dedication was simply not sustainable to continue to expand our research and growth."

The end result of that research and growth has reduced falls and injuries at all the facilities that use the program, Hester said.

"The really cool part is that today we positively impact the lives of millions we will never see and they will never know our science touched their lives," she said. "Tomorrow, we will help millions more age in place, free from institutionalization because a fall changed their life or their family could no longer manage caring for a faller at home. We would never have had this reach had we not formed a startup and used our company as a vehicle for our work."

Hester also credited UAMS for its unwavering support as the concept was being developed.

"It took years to develop and validate what has become the HD falls program," she said. "Most nurses don't have the resources or statistical background to accomplish this kind of work. UAMS Medical Center supported us administratively and let us go outside the box whenever we wanted to. That confidence and support are not found just anywhere. The other catalyst was UAMS BioVentures, which saw a diamond in the rough."

Next up for HD Nursing is growing its national client base while developing strategy and new revenue streams.

"In the future, our exit strategy could happen a few different ways as we already have multiple potential acquisition partners," Hester said.

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