

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## UMMC PHYSICIAN AND RESEARCHER WITH JACKSON HEART STUDY RECEIVES U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CAREER AWARD

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JACKSON, Miss. – A University of Mississippi Medical Center professor of cardiology and Jackson Heart Study researcher will receive a Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers next week, the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.

Dr. Ervin Fox, a University of Mississippi School of Medicine graduate and an 11-year member of the UMMC faculty, was selected for his research into how cardiovascular and vascular structures and their functions relate to disease outcomes, particularly heart disease in African-Americans. He plans on attending the awards ceremony next week in Washington, D.C.

"It's always good to get appreciation for hard work and dedication and it's good that this brings attention to the research that's going on here in Jackson," Fox said.

"We have three large cohorts of African-Americans here in Jackson and the opportunities to improve what's known about cardiovascular disease in African-Americans. That scientific knowledge can often be applied to all groups for better health. It's imperative that we use our resources to conduct health-disparity research here at UMMC."

Awardees are selected for their pursuit of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and their commitment to community service as demonstrated through scientific leadership, public education or community outreach.

President Barack Obama named Fox as one of 96 recipients on Monday. The awards ceremony is scheduled for July 31 in Washington.

"Discoveries in science and technology not only strengthen our economy, they inspire us as a people," President Obama said. "The impressive accomplishments of today's awardees so early in their careers promise even greater advances in the years ahead."

The Presidential Early Career Awards embody a national priority of producing scientists and engineers to advance the nation's goals, tackle grand challenges, and contribute to the American economy.

Fox earned a bachelor's in biomedical engineering in 1989 from Mississippi State University and graduated from the School of Medicine in 1993. He completed an internal medicine residency at Washington University Medical Center in St. Louis, a general cardiology fellowship at Tulane Medical Center, and a fellowship in clinical and research in echo-cardiology at Massachusetts General Hospital. He since earned a master's in public health from Harvard University.

In his research, Fox, a Clarksdale native, has used data collected from local African-American population-study groups in the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study (ARIC), Genetic Epidemiology Network of Atherosclerosis (GENOA), and Jackson Heart Study (JHS).

Last year he received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate the clinical and genetic determinates of vascular structure and function and how vascular structure and function relate to disease outcomes.

Dr. Herman Taylor, JHS director and principal investigator, said UMMC and the whole state of Mississippi can take great pride in Fox's designation.

"We are proud of Ervin, he is a brilliant example of fine work that the JHS has helped facilitate over the years," said Taylor, a cardiologist and UMMC professor of medicine.

Taylor said JHS has helped researchers' careers through mentoring, nurturing and providing opportunities to young investigators.

"We are working hard to assure the continuation of opportunities such as the ones Ervin has had," he said.

JHS is funded by two NIH institutes, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

"This Presidential Award recognizes the achievements of scientists early in their career who show exceptional potential for leadership in science and technology. Many are currently funded by the National Institutes of Health," said Dr. Francis S. Collins, NIH director.

"These individuals have only recently started research in their fields, and they have the potential for long and productive careers working on discoveries to improve the health of our nation."

Since the Presidential Early Career Awards began in 1996, the NIH has granted funding to 213 recipients of the award. Of this year's 20 honorees connected to the NIH, 17 are new investigators working at institutions around the nation. The others have positions in the NIH Intramural Programs.

The awards, established by President Bill Clinton, are coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy within the Executive Office of the President.

Recipients of this year's awards are employed or funded by the following departments and agencies: Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of the Interior, Department of Veteran Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the National Science Foundation, which join together annually to nominate the most meritorious scientists and engineers whose early accomplishments show the greatest promise for assuring America's preeminence in science and engineering and contributing to the awarding agencies' missions.

For a list of recipients names and institutions, visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/23/president-obama-honors-outstanding-early-career-scientists>

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at [umc.edu/publicaffairs](http://umc.edu/publicaffairs)