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MUSC, VA steadfast in protecting research study participants

Organizations awarded significant human research safety accreditation

Charleston, S.C. (Sept. 17, 2009) – South Carolinians, who have struggled with whether to participate in a research study, now have added evidence that the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (VAMC) offer the utmost in human safety and welfare.

MUSC and Ralph H. Johnson VAMC were recently awarded full accreditation by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc (AAHRPP). Accreditation is available to organizations worldwide that conduct biomedical, behavioral or social sciences research involving humans. While accreditation is not mandatory, MUSC and VA research administrators and faculty have always and continue to pursue extra steps to ensure patient safety throughout research studies.

"This accreditation is the gold standard seal of approval for organizations involved in clinical trials and human research. It ensures that the highest standards and protections extend to participants in all research studies within MUSC and the VA's purview," said MUSC President Ray Greenberg, M.D., Ph.D. "The infrastructure that was put in place to obtain this designation will also make it easier for people to access research studies that would benefit the entire community."

Those who participate in a research study at MUSC or the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC can trust that the AAHRPP accreditation requires quality enhancement and regulatory monitoring that improves efficiency, effectiveness, and record-keeping.

"This process required a diverse group of individuals from across MUSC and the VA to come together, conduct a detailed review and enhance various components of our clinical and translational research programs. Our goal was to make sure we are providing the highest level of protection and care that our research study participants deserve," said Rita Young, Ph.D., Ralph

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H. Johnson VAMC Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development. "Receiving this accreditation validates the VA's and the university's commitment to all aspects of human research participant safety and welfare."

MUSC and the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC join a select group of 194 institutions, including Emory University, Duke University, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and the University of California at San Francisco.

"The accreditation of our Human Research Protection Program by AAHRPP is a signature achievement that represents our commitment to the highest standards in all aspects of our mission," said Stephen M. Lanier, Ph.D., MUSC Associate Provost for Research.

AAHRPP is a non-profit organization that works with organizations that conduct human research to raise the level of protection for research participants. AAHRPP accredits organizations that can demonstrate they provide participant safeguards that surpass the threshold of state and federal requirements.

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About MUSC

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, The Medical University of South Carolina is the oldest medical school in the South. Today, MUSC continues the tradition of excellence in education, research, and patient care. MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and residents, and has nearly 11,000 employees, including approximately 2,000 faculty members. As the largest non-federal employer in Charleston, the university and its affiliates have collective annual budgets in excess of \$1.6 billion. MUSC operates a 650-bed medical center, which includes a nationally recognized Children's Hospital, the Ashley River Tower (cardiovascular, digestive disease, and surgical oncology), and a leading Institute of Psychiatry. For more information on academic information or clinical services, visit www.musc.edu. For more information on hospital patient services, visit www.muschealth.com.