

## The Mississippi Burn Center at UMMC: 'We're the natural place for this'

By Guest Columnist Ruth Cummins,  
University of Mississippi Medical Center

The University of Mississippi Medical Center treats the state's sickest of the sick and injured – and that includes burn victims.

With the establishment of the Mississippi Burn Center on the Jackson campus on January 19, a multidisciplinary team of specialists and providers will care for patients who have suffered significant and severe burns. Some of these patients may have other injuries that are just as traumatic as their burns, which makes multidisciplinary care all the more critical.

As the state's only Level I trauma center and academic medical center, "we're the natural place for this," said Dr. Alan Jones, associate vice chancellor for clinical affairs. "It will fill a health care gap – an important gap."

The Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning approved UMMC's request to establish and operate the center. When the burn center at Merit Health Central closed last fall, UMMC assembled the resources and expertise to fill the health care gap.

Previous legislation directed UMMC to establish a burn center. Its establishment

fulfills the Medical Center's statutory responsibility, but also provides needed care for burn patients in the state. UMMC will also collaborate with the Mississippi State Department of Health to finalize the center's accreditation.

Since the Merit Health Central burn center closed, Jones said, UMMC has treated upward of one hundred patients. That also includes about seventy-five who came through the Emergency Department, and a number of those were hospitalized.

"For a victim of burns, that's a very substantial event in someone's life," Jones said. "The care our organization can give in the state of Mississippi will help them get better sooner."

It's important that Mississippians can get care close to home. To have to travel hours away, out of state, creates a hardship for patients and families who

already are in trauma and challenges for family members to visit their loved one.

"We have all the specialists needed to do this on our staff," Jones said.

The Medical Center's specialty care will follow burn patients after their

initial treatment, said Dr. Peter Arnold, professor of surgery and chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Burn patients often require plastic surgery, sometimes extensive, after severe burns.

"When you have burns, you have them for the rest of your life," Arnold said. "The

[first] treatment for burns is just the beginning. We have the resources in place and the willingness of the organization for that to take place."

Even before Merit Health Central's burn center closed in October, UMMC was focused on filling the gap that created.

"We've been working on the process

of getting to where we are today since September," Jones said.

The Mississippi Burn Center will expand incrementally, eventually adding about thirty nurses specifically trained in burn care that will treat patients in a dedicated inpatient space.

"This is an opportunity for us to grow something really special in Mississippi," Arnold said.

Children's of Mississippi, UMMC's pediatric arm, has always treated children who suffer burns.

"As the only children's hospital in the state, we are the ideal organization to take care of really sick children," Jones said.

One of the Medical Center's goals for the Burn Center is to earn accreditation from the American Burn Association "and make it one of the best of the best," Jones said. "We want to have the ability to take care of anyone who is burned."

Initially, he said, some very severely burned patients will be transferred to larger, regional burn centers, something hospitals do nationwide in the best interests of their patients.

"We want to take care of the most acutely burned patients. That's who we are," Jones said. "We're excited to fill this health care void."



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Registered nurse Adrian Davis tidies up a trauma room in the Adult Emergency Department at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.



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