

Research & Innovation

\$2.39 million grant will establish program to research financial consequences of disease, emotional well-being of patients

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The [University of Alabama at Birmingham's](#) [Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center](#) and the [University of Tennessee Health Science Center](#) have received a \$2.39 million grant to create the Emotional Well-being and Economic Burden Research Network.



Maria Pisu, Ph.D.

The award is from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health and the National Institutes of Health Office of the Director.

Many patients suffering from the effects of COVID-19 have been left struggling with ways to pay for their treatment. Those concerns also affect patients seeking cancer treatment, emergency care, surgery and more. Little attention has been given to how the financial consequences of a disease affect a person's emotional well-being.

This is due partly to the lack of dedicated researchers in this field.

“We not only need more researchers, but need researchers from different fields of study to truly understand this topic in depth,” said Maria Pisu, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine at UAB.

Pisu, along with Michelle Martin, Ph.D., director of the Center for Innovation in Health Equity Research at UTHSC and professor in the UTHSC Department of Preventive Medicine, will collaborate to understand the relationships between financial burden, emotional well-being and broader health outcomes.

EMOT-ECON will include researchers from different disciplines, patients and caregivers, health care providers, and others with personal or professional interest and experience with certain research topics.



Michelle Martin, Ph.D.

Pisu and Martin’s team includes two physician-scientists, David Schwartz, M.D., chair of UTHSC’s Department of Radiation Oncology, and Margaret Liang, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UAB. Health communication expert Yu-Mei Schoenberger, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine at UAB, is also part of the team.

The network’s pilot project program aims to not only increase the number of studies in EMOT-ECON research, but also attract new people to the field.

“Our work will advance understanding of financial burden and emotional well-being and generate the body of knowledge necessary for developing interventions that minimize the impact of financial burden and

enhance emotional well-being,” Martin said.

Research patient advocate and president of the West Valley Ovarian Cancer Alliance Laurel J. Pracht applauds their efforts.

“It is past time to recognize the financial burden patients and caregivers bear to receive and afford treatment not only of cancer but also of chronic diseases,” Pracht said.”
Naturally it impacts a patient’s quality of life as well as well-being.”

