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Rural research partnership secures \$4.6 million to expand clinical trials in underserved rural communities

New CARE for Health™ awards will bring maternal health and chronic pain studies to rural clinics across several western states

(Seattle, WA) Researchers at ITHS' [WWAMI region Practice and Research Network](#), or WPRN, and their partners at Oregon Health & Science University's [Oregon Rural Practice-based Research Network](#), or ORPRN, have secured approximately \$4.6 million in renewed CARE for Health™ funding that will bring two promising clinical studies and ongoing infrastructure support to rural communities often left out of research.

The 36-month award will support WPRN and ORPRN's ongoing role as one of six regional hubs in the nation, as the Primary Care Rural and Frontier Clinical Trials Innovation Center (PRaCTICE). CARE for Health™ hubs like PRaCTICE work to ensure that people living in rural and frontier areas have greater access to cutting-edge research and evidence-based care in primary care clinics to address common and chronic clinical conditions.

"We're working to grow the cadre of investigators that can lead practice-based research in topics that are important to our rural primary care partners, and this has been a great opportunity to move that work forward," says **Allison Cole, MD, MPH**, director for WPRN and Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Washington.

"This work is about making sure rural communities are represented in research and have access to interventions that could improve health outcomes where people live," said **Melinda Davis, Ph.D.**, director of ORPRN and professor of family medicine in the OHSU School of Medicine.

The funding supports PRaCTICE in ongoing infrastructure support and co-design efforts and matching two new studies: one focused on expanding a doula-based maternal health intervention into rural settings, and another evaluating auricular point acupuncture as a self-management strategy for chronic pain.

The chronic pain study is part of the [NIH Pragmatic Trials Collaboratory](#). **Sebastian Tong, M.D.**, an Associate Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at University of Washington School of Medicine, and co-investigator on PRaCTICE grant, will serve as an investigator for the Northwest effort. (Claire Simon, M.D. will serve as site principal investigator.)

“Rural communities experience higher rates of chronic pain as well as poorer access to comprehensive pain services,” Tong said. “This study brings access to a non-drug treatment for chronic pain that would otherwise not be available to rural residents.”

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