

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2009

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Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/RICK McFARLAND

Cynthia J.M. Kane and Paul D. Drew, both professors in neurobiology and developmental sciences at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, stand by a picture showing a slide of brain tissue Tuesday.

Alcohol, the brain under study

3 grants helping UAMS team look for treatment medicines

CAROLYNE PARK
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

UAMS scientists are working to analyze alcohol's toxic effect on the brain and identify medicines that can block its destruction of brain cells.

The 10-person research team has gotten a \$3.1 million boost for its work in the form of three grants from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the National Institutes of Health.

The goal is to find medi-

cines that can help treat alcoholism and prevent further brain damage in those considered most vulnerable to suffering long-term disability or death from alcohol consumption, said Cynthia J.M. Kane, a University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences professor.

"We're talking about very high-risk individuals, people for whom alcohol consumption is life-threatening," said Kane, who works in the College of Medicine's Department of Neurobiology and

Developmental Sciences.

High-risk groups are alcoholic pregnant women and their unborn children; chronic adult alcoholics who drink "day after day, year after year"; and those who consume large quantities of alcohol in a short period of time, known as binge drinkers, she said.

An estimated 22,073 people die in the United States each year from alcohol-induced deaths, not including accidents and homicides, ac-

cording to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Debra Fiser, dean of the UAMS College of Medicine, said in a statement that the research could have widespread future benefits.

"Given the magnitude of the problem of alcohol abuse worldwide, the potential significance of this line of research cannot be overstated," she said.

Kane is the lead investigator. See **ALCOHOL**, Page 10B

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