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## UVI Secures \$550,000 in Grants to Address Health Inequities with AI

**The Eastern Caribbean Center at the University of the Virgin Islands will utilize NIH funding to integrate electronic health records into a secure AI platform and assess family planning clinics' needs to improve healthcare delivery in the USVI**

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Two grants totalling \$550,000 have been awarded to the Eastern Caribbean Center at the University of the Virgin Islands to “tackle health inequities and improve healthcare service delivery in the USVI,” using artificial intelligence and machine learning, according to a UVI press statement issued on Tuesday.

The grants were awarded under the National Institutes of Health's Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning Consortium to Advance Health Equity and Researcher Diversity (AIM-AHEAD) program.

The first – the Federated Network Grant – is a two-year award of \$400,000, which will be used to “integrate electronic health records from the Virgin Islands into the AIM-AHEAD Federated Network, a secure platform for collaborative research,” according to the UVI statement. This integration, which will be led by Dr. Aaron Rapp of UVI's College of Science and Mathematics and Ayishih Bellew of the Eastern Caribbean Center, is expected to “support health equity and advance public health decision-making while maintaining stringent patient privacy standards.”

The second grant, for \$150,000, is the Hub-Specific Pilot – Year 3 grant. The one-year award will be used to conduct a “comprehensive needs assessment of family planning clinics in the USVI.” This assessment will look at operational challenges for the clinics and investigate how AI or machine-learning technologies “can enhance efficiency and service delivery for underserved populations, particularly low-income residents and adolescents,” UVI says. This project will be led by ECC Director Dr. Marissa Johnson-Rogers and Trevesia Queeley-Richardson, a research specialist at the ECC.

The grants add to ongoing research by ECC research administrator Dr. Deshona Williams-Libur, who is studying the awareness, perceptions and opinions of AI and machine-learning technologies among medical practitioners in the territory.

“These awards position the University of the Virgin Islands and the Eastern Caribbean Center as leaders in addressing health disparities through innovative AI/ML technologies,” said Johnson-Rogers.

The work will be conducted in partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Health.