



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Duke Endowment Grant to Support Pharmacist-Provided Contraception**

*MAHEC pharmacist awarded \$705,000 to support implementation across North Carolina*

**Asheville, NC, March 20, 2023**—The chair of the Department of Pharmacotherapy at [UNC Health Sciences at Mountain Area Health Education Center \(MAHEC\)](#), Mollie Ashe Scott, PharmD, has been awarded a \$705,000 grant from The Duke Endowment to support the implementation of pharmacist-provided hormonal contraception across the state of North Carolina.

Unintended pregnancies are a significant public health concern that increase healthcare costs, medical complications, mental health concerns and negatively impact women and families. This project seeks to decrease unintended pregnancies by increasing access to effective contraceptives.

“I am very excited to begin this work and am thrilled that we received funding from The Duke Endowment,” said Scott, regional associate dean for UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, where she oversees the school’s Asheville campus, and an associate professor in the Division of Practice Advancement and Clinical Education.

“The North Carolina legislature passed House Bill 96 in 2021, which allows immunizing pharmacists who receive special training to initiate hormonal contraception pills and patches under standing order. This project seeks to accelerate implementation of pharmacist-initiated hormonal contraception and development new partnerships with other reproductive health stakeholders.”

According to [Power to Decide](#), more than 635,000 women in North Carolina live in contraception deserts and do not have adequate access to contraception services. Power to Decide defines contraceptive deserts as counties where the number of health centers offering the full range of birth control methods is not enough to meet the needs of the county’s women eligible for publicly funded contraceptives. Having pharmacists provide hormonal contraception opens up an additional door for access to care.

Providing hormonal contraception and engaging with the community without support may be daunting for rural pharmacists in contraceptive deserts. The UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy is poised to provide training for rural pharmacists, build relationships with reproductive health partners at the local level, connect them with national contraception leaders and support them with models of clinical service reimbursement to ensure sustainability. This approach will help develop a state-wide network of pharmacists who improve maternal and fetal health at significant cost savings.

“Our project will connect contraception pharmacists with the existing N.C. Maternal Health Innovations Program and identify new pharmacists who want to provide contraception services,” said Scott. “We

**Mountain Area Health Education Center**

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want to increase access to contraception and improve the health of underserved women in our state by ensuring that every woman who wants contraception is able to receive it.”

Participating pharmacists will be selected based upon existing relationships with the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, preceptors and/or by recommendation of strategic partners such as the Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition to MAHEC and UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, other project partners are the University of Utah College of Pharmacy and [Points True North Consulting](#).

### **About MAHEC**

Established nearly five decades ago, MAHEC – Mountain Area Health Education Center – is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. Headquartered in Asheville with satellite offices in [various locations](#) across its 16-county Western North Carolina service area, MAHEC is the largest of nine [Area Health Education Centers](#) in North Carolina. With more than 1,000 employees, MAHEC’s mission is to recruit, train and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina, with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources.

MAHEC’s 14-acre Biltmore campus is also home to [UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC](#), an academic health center in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill that includes programs from the UNC School of Medicine, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, and UNC Adams School of Dentistry. A private, [501\(c\)3 nonprofit organization](#), MAHEC will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2024. For more information, visit [mahec.net](#) and follow MAHEC on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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