

Groundbreaking Dementia Research Grant Solidifies Partnership with

University of South Florida and Reliance Medical Centers

*Reliance to Serve as Exclusive Sites for Study in Polk County*, *Now Seeking Participants*

April 9, 2021 – [Reliance Medical Centers](https://reliancemedicalcenters.com/) – one of the region’s most trusted healthcare providers for seniors – is thrilled to announce it has partnered with the University of South Florida on a critical brain health research initiative designed to examine how computerized training (“brain games”) might maintain or even enhance cognition with advancing age, reducing dementia risk.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently awarded USF a five-year, $44.4 million expected grant toward the Preventing Alzheimer’s with Cognitive Training (PACT) study, which will be implemented within the Greater Tampa Bay region – and specifically Polk County at Reliance Medical Centers.

Reliance will provide two sites for the study, donating space and resources to build a local research presence – known as the USF-Reliance Optimal Aging Research Laboratory at Reliance Medical Centers – located within its medical centers in Lakeland and Winter Haven. To further assist, Reliance also founded the USF Optimal Aging & Brain Health Research Fund in support of all aspects of brain health research among older adults.

“Reliance is proud to partner with the renowned team at USF and provide increased accessibility beyond its university sites, allowing more local seniors to access, participate and ultimately benefit directly from brain health research,” said Roberto Martinez, Co-CEO & Co-Founder of Reliance Medical Centers. “We are honored to serve as two of the sites for this ground-breaking study and look forward to furthering our mission to improve quality of life for our seniors everywhere.”

 “We are incredibly grateful for the continued generosity and support of Reliance Medical Centers which has enabled us to maintain a research presence in Polk County and reach a broader, more diverse group of study participants through embedded research facilities within the primary care setting,” said PACT study co-investigator Aryn Bush, Ph.D., Vice President of Science and Translation at Reliance Medical Centers and research assistant professor at USF. “The continuity and stability of Reliance’s support has allowed us to cultivate and strengthen relationships with our research participants and address the dearth of dementia prevention research opportunities in our community. In addition, this unique partnership facilitates the expeditious translation of our research findings to those who may benefit. Reliance Medical Centers has been instrumental in bringing the PACT clinical trial, which is the largest primary prevention trial to date designed to test the efficacy of cognitive training in reducing cognitive impairment and dementia, to Polk County.”

 “The overarching goal of our work is to promote healthy aging with a focus on brain health. Our mission is to discover and define early markers of dementia so as to improve prevention and risk reduction. A current focus is diversity as we know minority populations are at greater risk for dementia than other populations. Therefore, we are seeking to base more of our work in diverse communities,” said Jennifer Lister, Ph.D., PACT study co-investigator and Associate Dean at the USF College of Behavioral and Community Sciences. “The generous donations from Reliance Medical Centers have supported research staff and provided space in the community to do our work. In parallel with the PACT project, we have been able to conduct complimentary studies that enhance PACT through the Reliance donations. This has accelerated our identification of those at elevated risk of dementia and will improve the likelihood that we can reduce this risk with targeted treatment.”

USF and Reliance are currently enrolling study participants who will be required to initially come two times for in-person study visits. The remainder of the computerized training exercises will be conducted in the comfort of their own home or office. Participants must be 65 or older with no signs of cognitive impairment or dementia.

For more information, or to volunteer, please call (813) 974-6703, or visit the PACT study website at pactstudy.org.

**About Reliance Medical Centers**

Headquartered in Lakeland, Florida since 2017, Reliance Medical Centers is Polk County’s best and most trusted primary care provider for seniors. Committed to vastly improving the medical experience of its members, Reliance is focused on preventative healthcare and providing personalized attention around the unique needs of each individual. Reliance Medical Centers redefines healthcare by connecting each member with a Personal Medical Concierge and Care Focus Team headed by a Primary Care Physician and is proud to offer additional services including a Brain Health Program in partnership with the University of South Florida, onsite pharmacy, complimentary shuttles and membership to the Reliance Wellness Club; a club which provides free access to activities and services that are designed to promote a happier, healthier, more independent lifestyle. Through its innovative approach to healthcare, Reliance provides a caring, comprehensive solution for seniors looking to improve medical outcomes and overall quality of life.

**For more information visit RelianceMedicalCenters.com I 888-414-1413 I Medical Centers: Lakeland & Winter Haven**

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