

## Profile: Investigative Site

### Alamo Medical Research San Antonio, Texas

#### An interview with Eric Lawitz, medical director and principal investigator

#### How and why was Alamo Medical Research founded?

I am board certified in hepatology and gastroenterology, and I started Alamo Medical Research after my previous experience in the military, where a hepatology clinic with a focus on hepatitis C was started and thrived. After completing my military career, I wanted to continue and expand on my previous work. Thus, Alamo Medical Research was founded. Alamo Medical Research is a freestanding clinical trial site, which has five sub-investigators in addition to myself as primary investigator. The primary mission of Alamo Medical Research is to team with pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to develop therapies that will maximize hepatitis C cure rates and minimize toxicities of antiviral therapy. My sub-investigators, as gastroenterologists, are interested in many aspects of luminal gastroenterology, which is also an important therapeutic area for our center. We have a strong referral network throughout south central Texas.

#### What differentiates Alamo Medical Research from other sites?

My staff is highly specialized. We have a departmentalized system where each department are specialists in the work they do. Our lab staff draw, pack and ship all specimens with attention to detail and have either experience or certifications to be in the lab. The pharmacy staff handle all investigational agents and have never had any discrepancy in

drug accountability since our inception. We have a nursing staff that efficiently takes care of all nursing activities. I feel strongly that a credentialed provider—a nurse practitioner, a physician’s assistant or myself or one of the other sub-investigators—should see all subjects at all visits regardless if a physical exam is required or not. This gives sponsors high-level thinking at each visit, rather than just having a coordinator collecting CRF data. AMR also has strong administrative support for scheduling and other administrative tasks. This allows our coordinators time to interact on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis with the sponsors and they can fill in their CRFs in almost real time. This structure allows the coordinators to be able to keep up with their regulatory binder and they’re able to answer queries in a very timely fashion. In this regard the coordinator can be the ‘quarterback’ of the team and verify all components of the visits and trial are accomplished. Importantly our coordinators are sharp with attention to detail with many having CCRC certification. We pay them hourly so they work a standard 40 hours and are not burned out working many hours on a salary. This also shows our commitment to our sponsors in that we can guarantee they will have a smart, sharp, well rested coordinator to work with. The goal of this center is to turn out good work.

I am the president as well as the primary investigator, so we are able to move contracts along very quickly. I also have a dedicated budget and con-

**Year founded:** 2004  
**Employees:** 24  
**PIs:** 6  
**CRCs:** 10  
**Therapeutic areas:** Hepatology, gastroenterology  
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tract staff member and QA [quality assurance] manager. With easy contracting and use of central IRBs [institutional review boards], we are able to get trials started up quickly.

We also have a five-bed phase I unit and for people who want to study drug metabolism and hepatic intolerance, we’re very well-equipped to study that in the phase I environment. We can do PK and PD and have an expert staff for small phase I trials.

#### Do you have further plans for growth?

Yes. We are now negotiating to build a new building. We plan to triple our space and capacity in the next year. We have created a great team environment between sponsors, CROs and our center. Our system allows our site to retain sponsors. They like to bring their trials to AMR as they know they will get enrollment goals met and the data, professionalism, and teamwork which is top-notch.



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- Investigator Recruitment
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