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Medical School Watercooler Newsletter - January 31, 2010

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Med School Watercooler

NEWS FROM FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Friday, February 5, 2010

University of South Alabama Scientists Awarded \$14.5 Million for Infectious Disease Research Lab



(Left to Right:) Drs. Paul Brett, David Wood, Jonathon Audia, Mary Burtnick, and Herbert Winkler are all smiles at a news conference held announcing a construction grant to build a new BSL-3 lab on USA's campus.

The University of South Alabama College of Medicine has received a \$14.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to support ongoing research projects dedicated to the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases.

Funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the award is the largest competitive grant in the University's history. It will fund construction of a new state-of-the-art infectious disease research laboratory to be located on USA's main campus.

"The University of South Alabama College of Medicine has long been dedicated to improving the health of citizens through education and research toward the prevention and treatment of disease," said USA President Gordon Moulton. "This competitive grant from the National Institutes of Health reflects the quality of our faculty and the medical research at USA, as well as the institution's ability to stimulate the regional economy through its teaching, research and health care programs."

The new facility will house multi-use laboratory research space designed to study infectious diseases and facilitate expansion of USA's Select Agent Program. Dr. David Wood, Distinguished University Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, will serve as lead researcher for the grant.

"I am proud of our scientists and the quality of their research on infectious organisms," said Dr. Samuel Strada, dean of the USA College of Medicine. "The insight provided by the work of Dr. David Wood and his colleagues has led to a clear understanding of rickettsial genetics, offering new insights and strategies on preventing and treating epidemic typhus. This facility will have a significant positive impact on the current and future development of our research programs in molecular medicine."

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Dr. Wood, who also serves as chair of the department of microbiology and immunology at USA, stressed the significance of the new grant.

"This award will enhance our research capabilities that are currently focused on select agent pathogens, Rickettsia and Burkholderia, which pose significant threats to human health and security, underscoring the need to further investigate these organisms," said Dr. Wood. "This facility will also expand the opportunity for young researchers to develop successful, academic and scientific careers at USA."

According to Dr. Wood, Rickettsia prowazekii is a species of bacteria responsible for epidemic typhus, an infectious disease transmitted to humans by lice. Epidemic typhus is a highly communicable disease that can cause high fever, rash, muscle pain, severe headache, delirium and even death. During World War I and World War II, epidemic typhus killed millions of people.

In research initiated by Dr. Herbert Winkler over 30 years ago, USA scientists have worked to establish a productive Select Agent Program centered on Rickettsia. Within the last six years, the Select Agent Program at USA has expanded to include the study of Burkholderia. Burkholderia pseudomallei, which is found in soil and water, is a causative agent of melioidosis, an infectious disease. It can cause lung problems in humans, ranging from mild bronchitis to severe pneumonia and even death.

The new, 25,800-square-foot Laboratory of Infectious Diseases building (LID) will be constructed in the USA Technology and Research Park located at the north side of campus. It will replace the current Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratory building, the Laboratory of Molecular Biology. The new facility will more than double the current Biosafety Level 3 research capability at USA.

The LID building will include Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2) labs and Biosafety Level 3 labs, as well as office and support space. BSL-2 lab space will be used to study standard disease-causing bacteria, while the BSL-3 lab space will be used to study agents of bioterrorism that seriously threaten human health.

Having separate BSL-2 and BSL-3 lab areas under one roof will simplify and accelerate the pace of research while allowing researchers to work in close proximity and foster collaborative efforts.

The new facility will incorporate state-of-the-art safety and security standards. Energy-efficient "green" principles will also be implemented into the building's design. The project will provide safer working conditions, a more comfortable environment, natural daylighting, and will include sensors and software to maximize energy efficiency.

The construction of the research laboratory will stimulate the economy of the Gulf Coast region by providing both short-term engineering and construction jobs as well as long-term research positions, including faculty, research technology positions and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

Estimated completion for the facility is March 2013.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:32 PM](#) No comments:

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Internationally Renowned Trauma Surgeon to Present Mitchell Endowed Lecture in Traumatology and Surgical Care



Internationally renowned trauma surgeon Dr. Kenneth L. Mattox will present two lectures in February on the care of trauma patients. Both talks are open to all medical professionals and are made possible by the William A. L. Mitchell Endowed Lecture in Traumatology and Surgical Care.

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Scientists Awarded \$14...
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His first talk, "Abdominal Trauma Operations Which Changed My Life," will take place on Feb. 18, 2010, at 6 p.m. The second lecture, "Continuing Controversies in Blunt Thoracic Aortic Injury Screening and Treatment," will take place the following day, Feb. 19, 2010, at 7 a.m. Both talks will be held at the conference center located on the second floor of the University of South Alabama Medical Center.

Dr. Mattox is professor and vice chair of the Michael E. DeBakey department of surgery at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where he serves as chief of surgery. He also serves as chief of staff at Ben Taub General Hospital, also in Houston.

This memorial lecture is presented annually to honor the life of Mitchell, who died in 2005 from severe traumatic injuries sustained in a car crash. Despite the best of care, his injuries were so critical that he was not able to be saved. Following his treatment at the USA Trauma Center - in appreciation for the care he received - his family established the endowment and the lecture series both to memorialize Mitchell and to improve trauma patient care in our region through education. Mitchell was a senior at UMS-Wright Preparatory School at the time of his death.

In addition to his contributions as a trauma surgeon, Dr. Mattox has authored or co-authored more than 500 articles for scholarly and professional journals. He has served as editor, writer, and contributor to many books related to trauma, surgical procedures and techniques, and heart disease. He is a past president of the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma and a founding member of the American Trauma Society.

As an academic medical center, leaders in healthcare such as Dr. Mattox are invited to lecture to university and community physicians to improve patient care.

The USA Trauma Center is the area's only Level I Trauma Center, serving as a community resource and a leader in trauma care for citizens throughout the central Gulf Coast region. The center provides the highest level of care for trauma patients.

For more information on these lectures, call (251) 471-7993.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [5:24 PM](#) No comments:

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

"Surgical Treatment for Type 2 Diabetes"



February's Med School Café lecture will feature Dr. William Richards, professor and chair of surgery at the USA College of Medicine. The lecture, titled "Surgical Treatment for Type 2 Diabetes," will take place Feb. 18, 2009, at Christ United Methodist Church at 6101 Grelot Road in Mobile. The presentation will begin at 11:30 a.m. Boxed lunches will be provided to attendees at the conclusion of the talk.

Dr. Richards' lecture will include information on surgical options for treating obesity and Type 2 diabetes, as well as the impact these procedures have on improving patient health and quality of life.

Dr. Richards, who specializes in laparoscopic gastrointestinal surgery, will outline the latest procedures available, as well as discuss new techniques and research for people who are obese. During the talk, he will also provide important information on various diseases associated with obesity, including diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.

According to Dr. Richards, Alabama has the second highest incidence of obesity in the United States. "By effectively treating obesity, many serious medical conditions, such as Type 2 diabetes, can be cured," he said.

Body mass index (BMI) is used to estimate a healthy body weight based on a person's height. The CDC defines someone as obese if they have a BMI of 30 or more, while anyone with a BMI between 25 and 30 is considered overweight.

The Med School Café lecture and lunch are provided free of charge, but reservations are required. For more information or to make reservations, please call Kim Barnes at (251) 460-7770 or email kebarnes@usouthal.edu.

Med School Café is a free community lecture series sponsored by the USA Physicians Group. Each month, faculty from the USA College of Medicine share their expertise on a specific medical condition, providing insight on the latest treatment available as well as promising new research.

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