

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, May 28, 2010

Peter Harris Distinguished Scientist Award Presented to USA Physiologist



Dr. James M. Downey, professor of physiology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, was recently presented the Peter Harris Distinguished Scientist Award by the International Society for Heart Research (ISHR) at their world congress in Kyoto, Japan.

The award was given to Dr. Downey in recognition of outstanding scientific achievements that have led to major advances in the understanding of the cardiovascular system.

"Dr. James Downey was selected for this prestigious award in recognition of his pioneering work in the field of cardioprotection," said Dr. Roberto Bolli, president of ISHR.

"As a leader in cardioprotection for three decades, Dr. Downey has made major contributions to our understanding of the mechanisms responsible for heart attacks and of the therapies to alleviate such injury," said Dr. Bolli, who is also chief of the division of cardiovascular medicine and director of the Institute of Molecular Cardiology at the University of Louisville. "Much of the progress in this area must be credited to his innovative work."

Dr. Downey's research focuses on protecting the ischemic heart, a problem that occurs when the heart muscle receives insufficient blood flow. "It is important to keep cells alive between the time of occlusion and when blood flow is restored," Dr. Downey said. "Our research explores potential therapies that could be given that would protect the heart from damage when a person suffers a heart attack."

Dr. Downey received a bachelor of science degree from Manchester College in Indiana. His doctorate was in physiology from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, followed by postdoctoral training at Harvard.

He has published more than 260 full papers, and he sits on four editorial boards. He has been active in the governance of the ISHR since the 1980s and served as

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president of ISHR-International from 2001 to 2004. He has also been active in the governance committees of the American Physiological Society and the American Heart Association. His laboratory is funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

The Peter Harris Distinguished Scientist Award, created in 1986, is in recognition of the work of Dr. Peter Harris (1923-2002), an influential international statesman of cardiology. Dr. Harris was director of the Institute of Cardiology, University of London, and his career was dedicated to exploring the cardiovascular system and the origins of heart disease.

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Dr. William Richards to Give Community Lecture on Bariatric Surgery



Dr. William Richards, professor and chair of surgery at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, will present a community lecture titled "Bariatric Surgery for Morbid Obesity" at 6:30 p.m. on June 24, 2010. The lecture will take place in the Atlantis Room in the CWEB-II building behind USA Children's and Women's Hospital.

Dr. Richards's clinical interests focus on surgical treatment for Type 2 diabetes and treating motility disorders of the gastrointestinal tract using minimally invasive surgical procedures. He has performed more than 1,000 laparoscopic procedures since 1990,

including numerous laparoscopic bariatric procedures.

Dr. Richards received his medical degree from the University of Maryland School Of Medicine in Baltimore. He completed his internship at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla., and his surgery residency at the University of Maryland. Following his residency, Dr. Richards completed a surgical fellowship in portal hypertension and endoscopy at Emory University in Atlanta. In addition, he also completed a research fellowship in gastrointestinal motility at the Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville.

Dr. Richards is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a member of numerous professional societies, including the American Surgical Association, the Society of University Surgeons, the Southern Surgical Association, the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, the Association for Academic Surgery, the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons, the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgeons and the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

For more information on the lecture, contact Valerie Heintz at (251) 471-7413.

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USA Students Travel to Honduras for Medical Mission Trip

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Pictured above: The Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama's 2009 mission team pose for a group shot in Honduras

Twenty first and second year medical students at the University of South Alabama will be traveling to Honduras with the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama (CMMSA) from June 12-25, 2010.

The medical mission team will be serving Hospital Escuela in the capitol city of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

"We will perform orthopaedic operations, and we will provide some much-needed surgical equipment," said Duane Baxter, director of the Christian Medical Ministry. "We will also host free clinics to the poor in the outlying areas of the capitol city by partnering with Honduran physicians. While helping the needy with physical needs, our hope is to also share the gospel and the love of Christ to help meet spiritual and emotional needs."

This is the fourth year that CMMSA has made the trip to Honduras. The trips began when Mobile orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Robert McGinley and his wife Kelly saw a need to help mentor the students at the USA College of Medicine by spending time with them outside of the states.

"The McGinley's wanted the students to see the needs of the world," Baxter said. "Their passion is to share the love of Christ through medicine and mentoring."

Baxter, who serves as the stateside coordinator and team director while in the country, said that it is important for students to become involved in this type of experience.

"Students will see the importance of charity," he said. "It builds character and teamwork skills, and it gives them a world vision, allowing them to see the great needs of people not far from our country. It also gives them the opportunity to learn alongside great mentors."

The students participating in the mission trip will work with six physicians, including Dr. Albert W. Pearsall, professor of orthopaedic surgery at USA.

So far, CMMSA has raised over \$35,000 in gifts, grants and donations for this year's trip. The team would still like to raise over \$15,000.

If you wish to support a student or make a monetary donation to pay for medicines and supplies for the trip, send a tax-deductible gift to Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama, P.O. Box 851898, Mobile, Ala., 36685. Surgical supplies can be accepted on a case-by-case basis.

Contact the CMMSA office at (251) 517-0536 or e-mail office@cmmsa.org if you would like to become involved in CMMSA.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [3:09 PM](#) No comments:

USA Researchers Present Work at ATS 2010 Conference

Researchers at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine have developed a new preclinical model of pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) that may lead to improved research and better treatment of the disorder.

The study's results were presented at the American Thoracic Society's 2010 International Conference in New Orleans on May 19.

The new model mimics the plexiform lesion, which is the characteristic vascular change of pulmonary arteries in pulmonary hypertension.

"This study provides convincing evidence for the first time that the plexiform lesion develops in an experimental lab model of severe PAH," said Dr. Kotaro Abe, instructor of biochemistry at the USA College of Medicine and lead author of the study. "To date, no lab model of pulmonary arterial hypertension exists that rigorously mimics the plexiform lesion found in human patients."

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is a rare blood disorder of the lung in which the pressure in the pulmonary artery -- the blood vessel that leads from the heart to the lungs -- rises above normal levels and may become life threatening. It is a disease that affects people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

Researchers believe the model will reveal more detailed molecular and cellular mechanisms of severe PAH.

"This research gives us the opportunity to test therapies in our laboratories and then use that information in the clinical setting to better predict which treatments are available for patients with PAH," said Dr. Karen A. Fagan, chief of the division of pulmonary and critical care medicine at USA and medical director of the USA Pulmonary Hypertension Center.

"At the ATS conference, the model was incredibly well-received," Dr. Fagan said. "Scientists from around the world were very excited to see the results, and we believe it will have a significant impact on studies that are ongoing and planned worldwide."

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