

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, June 25, 2010

White Coat Ceremony Moved To Saenger Theatre

Due to no A.C. at the University of South Alabama's Mitchell Center, the White Coat Ceremony will be held downtown at the Saenger Theatre, S. Joachim Street and Conti Street at 11 a.m. tomorrow morning, June 26. Participants should plan to be at the Saenger at 10:30 a.m. You are responsible for notifying family and friends, and parking will be catch-as-catch-can.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:25 PM](#) No comments:

USA Medical Students Back From Medical Mission Trip To Honduras



Jelf (in pink) serves with physicians at a clinic in Honduras as part of CMMSA's 2010 medical mission trip.

Laura Jelf, a second-year medical student at USA, traveled with the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama (CMMSA) during its recent medial mission trip to Honduras.

Jelf encourages medical students to participate in some type of medical mission work. "It gives you a different level of clinical experience that you don't always get in school," she said. "I hope to carry my experiences and my compassion for the patients in Honduras and give back that same level of care to patients locally."

The following are two excerpts from e-mails Jelf sent from Honduras:

Excerpt 1:

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I have had some amazing experiences here in Honduras. I have never been more aware of my selfishness, wastefulness and ignorance. We saw nearly a thousand patients in the clinics, most ailing for months from simple illnesses that can easily be cured by a dose of antibiotics. The Hospital Escuela was heart breaking with the hoards of patients lying in the hallways with what we would consider critical conditions. They were waiting for treatment that might not come for days.

But above all this, the most amazing experience that stuck in my mind was an outreach trip we took. Mitch's Ministry of Divine Mercy (that is doing amazing things for the people in the mountain villages) identified some of the needy families in a small mountain village in San Matias. We took food in a small tub, drove as far as we could, then hiked the rest of the two miles up the mountain.

Through someone's yard, past a chicken coup and through a small corn field, we found Jorge, a self sufficient 85-year-old man with a heart of pure gold. He was so happy to have visitors and someone to share his faith with. Upon leaving he tried to give us a bunch of bananas as a parting gift. Although he had no food except some dried corn kernels, the food that we brought and the bananas, he wanted to share them with us.

The sheer generosity of the people of Honduras is something I will always carry with me. They welcomed us with open arms and were truly grateful for the work we did not only in the clinics but also in sharing our faith with them. I could go on. There is so much more I want to say and share about this tiny country forgotten by many people in the United States and tucked away between a somewhat unstable El Salvador and Nicaragua. However, pity is far from what they want or deserve. I have learned to be compassionate in ways I never knew.

Excerpt 2:

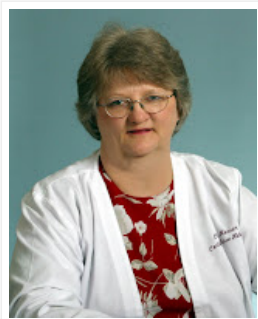
I was very nervous to be in the hospital. I was wondering how the Honduran orthopedic surgeons would take to being taught by American doctors -- like we were being pushy or presumptuous in thinking they needed or wanted our help. But I was very wrong. They welcomed all of us -- doctors and students -- with open arms. They were so eager to learn new techniques and skills to improve their level of care and reduce risk in invasive procedures. Not only that, but they were also more than happy to teach us as students along the way.

For more about the medical mission trip, visit

<http://medschoolwatercooler.blogspot.com/2010/05/medical-students-traveling-to-honduras.html>.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:20 PM](#) No comments:

USA To Pilot Centering Pregnancy Project



Cynthia Messer, a certified nurse-midwife with the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, received an \$11,900 grant from the March of Dimes to begin a pilot project to enhance prenatal care through the implementation of Centering Pregnancy.

Centering Pregnancy is a multifaceted model of group care that integrates the three major components of care -- health assessment, education and support -- into a unified program within a group setting. Messer, who practices at the USA department of obstetrics and gynecology and USA Children's and Women's

Hospital, will introduce this paradigm to Mobile.

Eight to 12 women with similar gestational ages meet together to learn care skills, participate in a facilitated discussion, and develop a support network with other group members. Each pregnancy group meets for a total of 10 sessions throughout pregnancy and early postpartum. The practitioner, within the group space, completes standard physical health assessments.

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The first Centering Pregnancy class will be held at 9 a.m. on July 21, 2010, at the USA Obstetrics and Gynecology clinic on 1720 Center St. in Mobile. Each class will have a total of 10 sessions with one session per month.

Through this unique model of care, women are empowered to choose health-promoting behaviors. Healthy outcomes for pregnancies, specifically increased birth weight and gestational age of mothers that deliver preterm, and the satisfaction expressed by both the women and their providers support the effectiveness of this model for the delivery of care.

Centering Pregnancy groups provide a dynamic atmosphere for learning and sharing that is impossible to create in a one-to-one encounter. Hearing other women share concerns that mirror their own concerns helps women to normalize the entire pregnancy experience. Also, groups are empowering because they provide support to the members and also increase individual motivation to learn and change.

Group prenatal care was shown to result in equal or improved perinatal outcomes in a study published in an NIH article titled "Group Prenatal Care and Perinatal Outcomes: A Randomized Controlled Trial." To view the full article, visit <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2276878/>.

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

For more information on the Centering Pregnancy classes, call (251) 415-1496.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [9:53AM](#) No comments:

Wednesday, June 23, 2010

Safety and Environmental Compliance Newsletter

The summer 2010 issue of The Safety Source Newsletter, the newsletter for USA's office of Safety and Environmental Compliance, is now available. To view the newsletter, follow this link: <http://www.southalabama.edu/environmental/newsletter.pdf>.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [8:46AM](#) No comments:

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

When "Fun In The Sun" Is Dangerous - Understanding UV Rays



With temperatures rising and summer now in full swing, it is important to protect your skin from the damaging effects of the sun's rays, also known as ultraviolet (UV) rays.

Mona Hagmaier, a physician assistant at the University of South Alabama Knollwood Physicians Group, said that because UV damage is difficult to reverse, it is important to protect your skin every time you are outside.

"UV light is injurious because it damages the body's genetic material, which in turn changes the kinds and amounts of chemicals that the skin cells make," she said. "It is these changes to the DNA that are responsible for the damaging effects of UV light, including skin cancer, premature skin aging and burning."

Hagmaier says there are several steps you can take to limit the amount of exposure to UV rays, including wearing a sunscreen and applying it often for

maximum protection.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends products with a sun protection factor of at least 30. "SPF numbers that are higher do mean more protection, but many people think that a sunscreen with SPF 45 would give three times as much protection as one with SPF 15, which is not true," Hagmaier said. "SPF 30 sunscreens filter out about 97 percent and SPF 15 sunscreens filter out about 93 percent."

Hagmaier also recommends staying out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when UV radiation is more intense, as well as wearing clothing with built-in protection.

"Some companies now produce clothing that protects against UV exposure even when wet," she said. "This clothing will have a label listing the ultraviolet protection factor. Look for sunglasses labeled as blocking UVA and UVB light. Also, wear a hat with a wide brim to protect ears and eyes, as well as the forehead, nose and scalp."

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, there are more than 3.5 million estimated cases of skin cancer detected each year, making it the most common cancer in the United States. Sadly, Hagmaier said, more than 1 million Americans still use tanning salons, which also produces dangerous UV exposure.

The Skin Cancer Foundation says that tanning beds will increase your risk of melanoma, a type of skin cancer that causes the majority of skin cancer deaths, by 75 percent. People who use tanning beds are also 1.5 times more likely to develop basal cell carcinoma, and 2.5 times more likely to develop squamous cell carcinoma.

"Using tanning salons has no proven benefit," Hagmaier said, "and the 10 percent excise tax on the use of indoor tanning beds as part of the recent health care reform law may save lives. Perhaps for some, the tax could provide one more reason to avoid these deadly tanning beds."

Hagmaier said the following people are more at risk of developing melanoma than others:

- Blondes or redheads
- Fair-skinned individuals that freckle and burn easily
- A person who already has a history of melanoma
- A person who has a first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with melanoma
- A person who has several or more moles
- Someone with an autoimmune disease such as lupus
- Someone who has had an organ transplant

The most important warning sign for melanoma, Hagmaier said, is a new spot on the skin that is changing color, shape or size. She suggests following the A-B-C-D-E rule as a guide to the signs of melanoma:

- A -- asymmetry -- when one-half of a birthmark or mole does not match the other
- B -- border -- if the edges are blurred or irregular
- C -- color -- if the color includes patches of pink, black, brown, red, white or blue
- D -- diameter -- if the spot is larger than the size of a pencil eraser
- E -- elevation or evolution -- if the mole seems to be spreading or rising

Other warning signs include changes in sensation such as pain, itchiness or tenderness, or a sore that does not heal.

Hagmaier said that your health care provider should check you annually as part of a routine cancer-related checkup, and you should check your skin once a month at home in front of a full-length mirror in a well-lit room.

"It is important that you learn the pattern of freckles, moles and spots on your body so you will notice any changes over time," she said. "If you find something

suspicious, you should see a health care provider with training in biopsying skin cancers immediately."

Monday, June 21, 2010

FMC Jaguar Dialysis Center Opens



Joseph Ratcliff of Mobile was one of the first patients seen at the new FMC Jaguar Dialysis Center that opened its doors to the public today. Dr. Michael Culpepper, professor of internal medicine and chief of the division of nephrology at USA, said the new dialysis center has 24 chairs, or stations, for delivery of hemodialysis. "The unit is also equipped with the latest hemodialysis machines with versatile systems that allow individualization of the treatment for each patient," he said.

"The chairs, to which the patients are confined for treatments lasting 3.5 to 4.5 hours, are designed for both safety and comfort and include comforts like built-in heating elements," Dr. Culpepper said. "All the stations are connected to a central computer system that provides chair-side access to patient information and continuous monitoring of the treatment process." The FMC Jaguar Dialysis Center is located on the USA Medical Center campus on the corner of Stanton Road and Fillingim Street.

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