

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, January 5, 2012

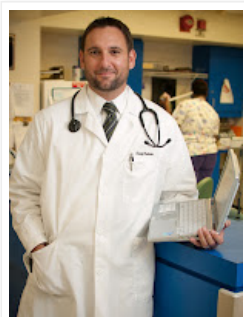
New Poll Demonstrates Importance of Health Research, Development

The new edition of America Speaks, a compilation of public opinion polls commissioned by Research!America, shows that the majority of Americans say health research and development are key to building the U.S. economy and lowering health care costs.

To learn more, [click here](#).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [2:38 PM](#) No comments:

January Med School Café - 'Starting Your Year off Right: Making Resolutions a Reality'



The January Med School Café lecture will feature sports medicine family physician Dr. Brian Bettencourt, assistant professor of family medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

His lecture, titled "Starting Your Year off Right: Making Resolutions a Reality," will take place Jan. 19, 2012, at the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile. Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m., and the presentation begins at noon.

Dr. Bettencourt will discuss the advantages of adopting healthy habits such as regular exercise and proper nutrition, as well as how to improve your health by eliminating unhealthy habits such as smoking and excessive drinking.

Dr. Bettencourt, who is a team physician for the USA athletics program, earned his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pa. He completed residency training in family medicine with USA, as well as a fellowship in sports medicine.

The Mobile Museum of Art is located at 4850 Museum Drive in Mobile.

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 Partridge at (251) 460-7770 or e-mail kepartridge@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.

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Posted by Med School Watercooler at [12:26 PM](#) No comments:

USA College of Medicine Welcomes Dr. Charles Eric McCathran



Dr. Charles Eric McCathran was recently appointed associate professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

Prior to his appointment to USA, Dr. McCathran was an associate clinical professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, La.

Dr. McCathran earned his medical degree from the LSU School of Medicine. He completed residency training in obstetrics and gynecology at the LSU Medical Center in Shreveport, La.

Dr. McCathran is a member of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the Central Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics. He is board certified with the American Board of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

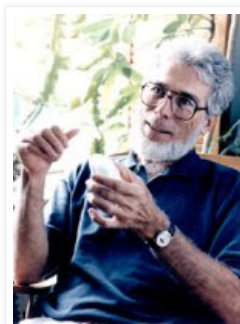
He is now accepting new patients. For appointments, call (251) 415-1496.

Next Week's DSS - Dr. Richard Cone

The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will be presented by Dr. Richard Cone, the Thomas C. Jenkins Professor of Biophysics in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University.

His lecture, titled "Robust Barrier Function of Mucus," will take place Jan. 12, 2012, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium on USA's main campus.

Dr. Cone's main research focus is on the study of mucosal immunity -- new methods for contraception and disease protection. In addition, Dr. Cone's research focuses on developing barrier methods for protecting against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancy.



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Dr. Cone received a B.S. degree at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago.

For more information on Dr. Cone's research, [click here](#).

Dr. Fortwendel Awarded Research Grant



Dr. Jarrod Fortwendel, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, was recently awarded a two-year research grant by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. The grant award totals \$263,960.

Dr. Fortwendel said his research focuses on deciphering pathogenic mechanisms of the fungus, *Aspergillus fumigatus*. *A. fumigatus* is the cause of invasive pulmonary aspergillosis, an infection of the lungs.

Invasive pulmonary aspergillosis is the most serious type of aspergillosis infection and is difficult to cure.

"Previous work in our laboratory has shown a protein, called RasA, to be a major regulator of the fungus' invasive growth and virulence," Dr. Fortwendel said. "The objective of our proposed studies is to identify portions of the RasA protein that are important for its sub-cellular localization and function during invasive growth."

Dr. Fortwendel said RasA activity is especially important for formation of the long tubular structures, known as hyphae, developed by fungi to invade the human body.

"Through these studies, we will begin to understand how we might target RasA to inhibit its function," he said. "Inhibiting RasA function should, in turn, inhibit invasive growth and halt the progression of disease."

Dr. Fortwendel said the research will not only impact *A. fumigatus* infections, but may also apply to all medically important fungi. "We are focusing on aspects of Ras protein function that might be shared by all fungi associated with invasive infections in immunocompromised patients."

"Discovering new ways to inhibit fungal growth is essential to continue combating serious invasive infections," Dr. Fortwendel added. "Our studies bring a new basic science focus, fungal pathogenesis, to USA. We believe our work will offer new opportunities for collaborations and enhance the research environment within the College of Medicine."

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