

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, July 12, 2012

College of Medicine Welcomes Dr. Javier Laurini



Dr. Javier Laurini was recently appointed assistant professor of pathology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

Prior to his appointment to USA, Dr. Laurini completed a surgical pathology fellowship at Mayo Clinic and a hematopathology fellowship at the University of Nebraska.

Dr. Laurini received his bachelor's degree from the National College of Buenos Aires in Argentina. He received his medical degree from University of Salvador School of Medicine in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1995.

He completed his residency in anatomic pathology at the Center of Medical Education and Clinical Investigations (CEMIC) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and later completed a three month training experience in hematopathology in the Department of Pathology at Massachusetts General Hospital.

After completing his residency and internship, he was appointed administrative chief resident of the Department of Pathology in 1999 at the CEMIC. In 2000, he completed a fellowship in surgical pathology at British Hospital, also in Argentina. He later served as a visiting clinician for pathology at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota.

In 2006, Dr. Laurini served as a resident in the combined anatomic and clinical pathology program at USA College of Medicine.

Dr. Laurini is board certified in anatomic and clinical pathology by the American Board of Pathology.

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Blog Archive

- ▶ 2023 (10)
- ▶ 2022 (249)
- ▶ 2021 (269)
- ▶ 2020 (191)
- ▶ 2019 (245)
- ▶ 2018 (236)
- ▶ 2017 (231)
- ▶ 2016 (206)
- ▶ 2015 (205)
- ▶ 2014 (241)
- ▶ 2013 (232)
- ▼ 2012 (245)
 - ▶ 12/30 - 01/06 (2)
 - ▶ 12/16 - 12/23 (4)
 - ▶ 12/09 - 12/16 (4)
 - ▶ 12/02 - 12/09 (4)
 - ▶ 11/25 - 12/02 (4)
 - ▶ 11/18 - 11/25 (4)
 - ▶ 11/11 - 11/18 (4)
 - ▶ 11/04 - 11/11 (4)
 - ▶ 10/28 - 11/04 (4)
 - ▶ 10/21 - 10/28 (5)
 - ▶ 10/14 - 10/21 (5)
 - ▶ 09/30 - 10/07 (5)
 - ▶ 09/23 - 09/30 (6)
 - ▶ 09/16 - 09/23 (6)
 - ▶ 09/09 - 09/16 (6)
 - ▶ 09/02 - 09/09 (4)
 - ▶ 08/26 - 09/02 (4)
 - ▶ 08/19 - 08/26 (4)
 - ▶ 08/12 - 08/19 (4)
 - ▶ 08/05 - 08/12 (4)
 - ▶ 07/29 - 08/05 (5)

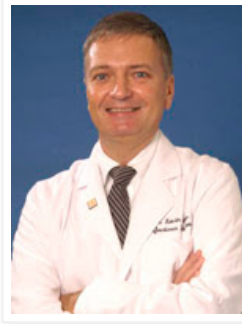
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USA Physician Featured on Episode of 'The Dead Files'

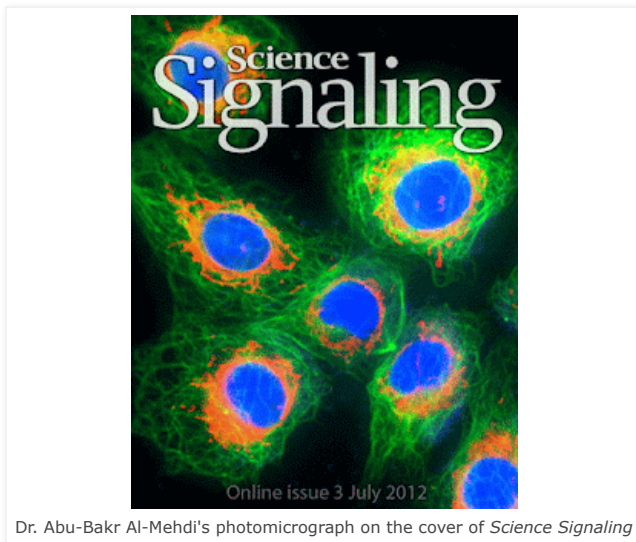
Dr. William Kevin Green, associate professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine, was interviewed in the Travel Channel's show "The Dead Files."

The episode, titled "A Widow's Rage," investigated paranormal encounters at an old Southern plantation home in Uriah, Ala. During the episode, Dr. Green provided information on yellow fever, a viral infection spread by mosquitos.

To view the episode, [click here](#). Skip to 26:00 - 26:55 for Dr. Green's interview.



USA Researchers' Work Published in Science Signaling Journal



Dr. Abu-Bakr Al-Mehdi's photomicrograph on the cover of *Science Signaling*

The work of four researchers at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine was recently published in the July 3 issue of *Science Signaling*.

Dr. Abu-Bakr Al-Mehdi, associate professor of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine, along with Dr. Mark Gillespie, chair of pharmacology; Dr. Viktor Pastukh, pharmacology instructor; and Dr. Mikhail Alexeyev, associate professor of cell biology and neuroscience, co-authored the paper that outlines research conducted at USA.

"The results of our research contribute to the understanding of the pathophysiology of a variety of human diseases such as pulmonary hypertension, developmental abnormalities, cancer growth and other conditions where hypoxia is involved," Dr. Al-Mehdi said.

Dr. Al-Mehdi said the information points to several new, interrelated concepts in hypoxic signaling. Hypoxia, or low blood oxygen, is a stimulus that serves as an inciting factor in cancerous tumor growth and other human diseases.

According to Dr. Al-Mehdi, the mitochondria – ultimate consumers of oxygen – are increasingly being recognized as a new player in cellular response to hypoxia.

- ▶ 07/22 - 07/29 (5)
- ▶ 07/15 - 07/22 (4)
- ▼ 07/08 - 07/15 (5)
 - College of Medicine Welcomes Dr. Javier Laurini
 - USA Physician Featured on Episode of 'The Dead Files'
 - USA Researchers' Work Published in Science Signali...
 - July Med School Café - 'Finding a Cure for Epilepsy'
 - Pulmonary Researchers Participate in Pulmonary Hyp...

- ▶ 07/01 - 07/08 (4)
- ▶ 06/24 - 07/01 (4)
- ▶ 06/17 - 06/24 (5)
- ▶ 06/10 - 06/17 (6)
- ▶ 06/03 - 06/10 (4)
- ▶ 05/27 - 06/03 (4)
- ▶ 05/20 - 05/27 (4)
- ▶ 05/13 - 05/20 (6)
- ▶ 05/06 - 05/13 (5)
- ▶ 04/29 - 05/06 (7)
- ▶ 04/22 - 04/29 (6)
- ▶ 04/15 - 04/22 (4)
- ▶ 04/08 - 04/15 (5)
- ▶ 04/01 - 04/08 (7)
- ▶ 03/25 - 04/01 (5)
- ▶ 03/18 - 03/25 (5)
- ▶ 03/11 - 03/18 (5)
- ▶ 03/04 - 03/11 (5)
- ▶ 02/26 - 03/04 (5)
- ▶ 02/19 - 02/26 (5)
- ▶ 02/12 - 02/19 (6)
- ▶ 02/05 - 02/12 (5)
- ▶ 01/29 - 02/05 (6)
- ▶ 01/22 - 01/29 (6)
- ▶ 01/15 - 01/22 (4)
- ▶ 01/08 - 01/15 (6)
- ▶ 01/01 - 01/08 (5)

- ▶ 2011 (262)
- ▶ 2010 (247)
- ▶ 2009 (88)

"In this report, we show that mitochondria, the producers of energy and other signaling molecules, cluster around the nucleus for targeted delivery of oxidants to facilitate gene expression in cellular adaptation to hypoxia," Dr. Al-Mehdi said. "This model of directed organellar migration is an exciting and novel paradigm in cellular signaling."

Because the presence of hypoxia in solid tumors is an indicator of poor prognosis, Dr. Al-Mehdi said understanding the details of the transcriptional response to hypoxia may provide new targets for the therapeutic treatment of solid tumors.

"The major abnormalities in cancer are uncontrolled cellular proliferation and the ability of the cells to metastasize," Dr. Al-Mehdi said. "Mitochondrial clustering may play a significant role in how cancer cells acquire the ability to colonize and proliferate in cancer tissues that are often low in oxygen."

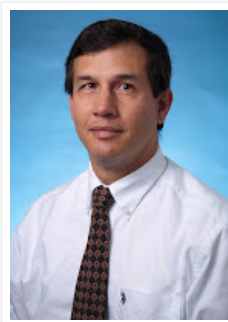
Dr. Al-Mehdi said the results from this study suggest that modulation of mitochondrial clustering may impact the progression and outcome of the disease processes involving hypoxia and point towards new drug development strategies that would target mitochondrial translocation.

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July Med School Café - 'Finding a Cure for Epilepsy'

The July Med School Café lecture will feature Dr. Juan G. Ochoa, associate professor of neurology at the USA College of Medicine.

His lecture, titled "Finding a Cure for Epilepsy," will take place July 18, 2012, at the Via! Health, Fitness & Enrichment Center in Mobile. Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m., and the presentation begins at noon.



Dr. Ochoa, who is the medical director for the epilepsy monitoring unit (EMU) at USA, will lecture on epilepsy, a disorder that results from the generation of electrical signals inside the brain, causing recurring seizures. Dr. Ochoa will provide the latest information on the causes of epilepsy, as well as available treatment options.

The EMU, located at the USA Medical Center, is a collaborative environment that provides unique and highly specialized care with state-of-the-art technology for patients with epilepsy and other neurological conditions.

Dr. Ochoa received his medical degree from Universidad Javeriana in Bogota, Columbia. He conducted his family practice residency at Jamaica Hospital in New York and his neurology residency at State University of New York. In addition, he completed a fellowship in clinical neurophysiology and epilepsy at Montefiore Hospital Medical Center in New York and a fellowship in medical education at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla.

The Via! Health, Fitness & Enrichment Center is located at 1717 Dauphin St. 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.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [3:08 PM](#) No comments:

Pulmonary Researchers Participate in Pulmonary Hypertension Association's International Conference



Frequently, scientists and physicians gather at professional conferences around the world to share new ideas for better treatments and to discuss medical advances.

Last month, physicians and researchers from the University of South Alabama attended such a conference – but this one had a unique twist – patients living with the condition being discussed participated in the program. The conference brings together patients, caregivers, researchers, nurses, and physicians for a weekend to learn from one another.

The patients attending the 10th International Conference of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association did not present research findings; rather they volunteered to participate in research projects designed to improve the care available for all patients living with pulmonary hypertension. For many patients it is the first time they may meet others with this disease. For some researchers, it is also the first time where they may meet patients with the illness they are researching.

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is a fatal progressive illness that causes severe shortness of breath and right heart failure. The conference is the largest gathering of PAH patients in the world offering a unique opportunity to researchers to gather data over a weekend that would otherwise take years to accumulate.

Among the nine research projects initiated at the conference, three are being led by pulmonary researchers from USA, who drew more than 200 blood samples from volunteers who are impacted by pulmonary hypertension.

The first project, led by Dr. Donna Cioffi, assistant professor of biochemistry at USA, will use samples to better understand the role of anti-endothelial antibodies in endothelial cell activation in PAH.

Dr. Cioffi, an alum of USA's Basic Medical Sciences program, is working with USA graduate student Rebecca Morrow in examining circulating antibodies in the blood of PAH patients to determine if they cause changes in the cells of the blood vessels that could promote the development of PAH.

In the second project, Dr. Natalie Bauer, assistant professor of pharmacology at USA, and Dr. Karen Fagan, associate professor of internal medicine and pharmacology, chief of the division of pulmonary and critical care medicine, are working with post-doctoral fellow Dr. Salina Gahrie to examine microparticles in PAH. They are looking at the small, circulating particles to determine if the numbers and types are different in PAH patients and to determine if they might be a biomarker for PAH.

Additionally, Dr. Fagan said that they will determine if these microparticles - that carry a variety of factors that can change cell behavior - promote changes in the lung circulation that might cause PAH.

The third project involves microRNAs in PAH. Principal investigators Dr. William Gerthoffer, chair of biochemistry at USA, and Dr. Fagan, assisted by graduate

student Jared McClendon, and post-doctoral fellow Dr. Sachindra Joshi, are examining the small pieces of RNA that can be found in the blood cells of patients with PAH to determine the levels and types of miRNA.

Dr. Fagan said this could ultimately identify miRNAs that are biomarkers for PAH as well as help to understand the potential that changes in miRNAs may play in the development of PAH.

The mission of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association is to find ways to prevent and cure pulmonary hypertension, and to provide hope for the pulmonary hypertension community through support, education, advocacy and awareness. For the USA researchers, the PHA Conference also gave them an opportunity to see the potential impact their research may someday have.

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