

# Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, July 22, 2016

## USA Medicine Magazine - Mailing Now



Check your mailbox for the Summer 2016 issue of USA MEDICINE magazine, which features articles relating to the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

This issue includes stories of the character and kindness of medical students, the success of alumni, and the commitment faculty members have made to medical excellence.

The magazine can be viewed online [here](#). To request more copies of the magazine, email [agivens@health.southalabama.edu](mailto:agivens@health.southalabama.edu).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [8:00 AM](#) No comments:

Thursday, July 21, 2016

## USA Welcomes Dr. Charles Hartin Jr.



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USA Medicine Magazine - Mailing  
Now

Dr. Charles Hartin Jr. recently joined the University of South Alabama College of Medicine as an associate professor of surgery and will serve as a pediatric surgeon with USA Physicians Group.

Prior to joining USA, Dr. Hartin worked at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, as an assistant professor in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery.

He earned his bachelor of science degree in chemistry from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Birmingham, Ala., and his medical degree from USA. He completed an internship in general surgery at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke, Va. Dr. Hartin completed his residency training in general surgery at the State University of New York at Buffalo in Buffalo, N.Y. He completed his research fellowship in pediatric surgery at Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo in Buffalo, N.Y. He also completed his pediatric surgery fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine at Houston, Texas.

Dr. Hartin has authored dozens of publications and abstracts and is a member of several professional organizations including the American College of Surgeons, American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Pediatric Surgical Association.

To make an appointment, call 415-1475.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [11:05 AM](#) No comments:

## Mark Your Calendar: 43rd Annual Medical Student Research Day



The University of South Alabama College of Medicine will host the 43rd annual Medical Student Research Day on Friday, July 29, 2016, in the Medical Sciences Building.

Oral presentations begin at 8:30 a.m., followed by a keynote address at 11:15 a.m. The event will conclude with poster presentations from 12:45 until 2 p.m.

This year's keynote address will be given by Dr. John Perfect, James B. Duke Professor of Medicine and chief of infectious diseases at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. Dr. Perfect is a member of the American Society of Microbiology, Infectious Diseases Society of America and International Society for Human and Animal Mycology.

Dr. Perfect is also a long time member of the Mycoses Study Group and provides advisory consultations for a series of pharmaceutical companies in antifungal drug development. He directs and designs clinical trials involving fungal infections and antifungal therapy, and he is the lead author of the 2012 IDSA Cryptococcal Treatment Guidelines.

[USA Welcomes Dr. Charles Hartin Jr.](#)

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The nine-week Medical Student Summer Research Program includes hands-on research related to basic science and/or clinical medicine; a seminar program that focuses on various scientific and clinical topics; and student presentations at Research Day. Through this program, students develop an appreciation of how research contributes to the knowledge and the practice of medicine. Support for the program is provided by the USA College of Medicine Dean's Office and the National Institutes of Health.

[Click here](#) for additional information.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [10:55 AM](#) No comments:

Wednesday, July 20, 2016

## 'As I Cared for Them, They Cared for Me'



USA cardiologist Dr. Clara Massey has cared for patients between the ages of 19 and 103 – and for up to three generations within a family. Many of those patients have been with her since the start of her career.

"I am humbled by the trust and support of my patients," she said. "As I cared for them, they cared for me."

This year – after 25 years of dedicated service – Dr. Massey will retire from the University of South Alabama, where she served as professor of internal medicine and director of the division of cardiology.

"The last 25 years in cardiology have been a calling," she said. "So many people sacrificed in order to give me this opportunity. I've had much to pay forward."

Dr. Massey grew up on a farm in the foothills of the Arkansas Ozarks – driving a tractor and hauling hay at the age of six. She played exhibition football in high school; her team was undefeated. After earning a degree in medical technology from Arkansas State University, she worked as a med tech and director of the chemistry lab at St. Bernard's Hospital in Jonesboro, Ark. It was there that she was urged to apply to medical school, and her tuition was paid for by her hometown family physician and by her family's support.

After medical school, Dr. Massey chose to study the heart because in 1983, she thought, "how hard can it be? It's just a pump with four chambers."

Back then, medications were few, and catheter-based intervention and open heart surgery were in their infancy. Over the next few years, she watched and participated in the explosion of cardiovascular medicine. "I have been so fortunate," she said. "It has been a magical time for cardiology, and more is on the horizon."

Although her greatest joy has come from caring for patients, she said she's also



proud of her involvement in the development of the USA Heart Team. "It is an innovative way of providing evidence-based, high-quality, team-delivered care," she said. "I am grateful for the partnership of Dr. Carl Maltese and Christy Paragone during this endeavor, in addition to my colleagues in the Division of Cardiology and the incredibly dedicated staff at USA. The development of the team was likely the most difficult task of my career, but also the most rewarding."

Dr. Massey said her career has been enriched by so many people at USA that it would be impossible to list them all. "Hopefully my work ethic expressed my thank you to all of them," she said. "However, there are two special employees who magnified my abilities and enriched my career – Kelley Day, my clinic nurse and partner in a commitment to patient-centered care, and Donna Gregory, my administrative support and moral compass throughout my career."

During her time at USA, Dr. Massey participated in the training of more than 100 cardiology fellows and countless residents. "I've had a wonderful & rewarding career, and I believe I have succeeded in giving back," she said. "It is now time to hand off to the next generation."

If she could offer any advice to young physicians, it would be to "surround yourself with people who elevate your game, who place patient needs first and who hold you accountable for best care."

"It makes all the difference," she said.

In the next phase of her life, Dr. Massey intends on taking care of herself and her family. She is looking forward to spending time with her daughter, Amanda, who is getting married next year; and her husband of more than 30 years, Dr. Charles Hamm.

The USA Department of Cardiology recently held a beach-themed sendoff for Dr. Massey. [Click here](#) to view more photos.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [11:45AM](#) No comments:

**Tuesday, July 19, 2016**

## Dr. Simmons, USA Trauma Center awarded NIH Grant



As a trauma surgeon operating in an academic health center, Dr. Jon Simmons dedicates himself daily to providing each patient with leading-edge critical care.

He is one of five trauma surgeons that operate at the University of South Alabama's Trauma Center – the only academic Level 1 Trauma Center on the Gulf Coast between New Orleans and Tampa. These highly specialized trauma

surgeons are also board-certified as ICU doctors.

However, Dr. Simmons, who serves as associate professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine, adds a unique feature to the group as he is also considered a physician-scientist. He balances being a trauma surgeon with an equally passionate curiosity for researching new ways to better treat severely injured patients.

Several weeks ago, Dr. Simmons was awarded a five-year, \$945,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that will enable him to continue exploring a puzzling question that remains largely unanswered and therefore not adequately treated – why do patients who suffer similar traumatic injuries develop multiple system organ failure?

"One thing that intrigues me and most intensivists -- whether it be a trauma surgeon or a pulmonologist -- is that patients with severe infections or trauma usually do not die from the trauma or infection," Dr. Simmons said. "These patients die from an inflammatory response that causes multiple organs to fail despite not being involved in the initial injury or infection."

This award represents the fourth research grant recently obtained by Dr. Simmons to conduct research at the USA Trauma Center. The recent NIH award is designed to support the mentoring of physicians by more seasoned scientists, one of the core values of academic medicine. "A K08 grant is a mentored award, so you must demonstrate tremendous institutional support and have an excellent mentorship team," Dr. Simmons said.

Dr. Simmons' mentorship team is comprised of Dr. Mark Gillespie, professor and chair of pharmacology and a member of the Center for Lung Biology at the USA College of Medicine; Dr. Bill Richards, professor and chair of surgery; and several of his previously influential mentors at Johns Hopkins and Harvard.

"My role as Dr. Simmons' mentor is to be a full partner in his research, and to combine my skill set with his to make a stronger team," Dr. Gillespie said. "I hope to provide opportunities for him to take what I know and use his enormous talents as a trauma surgeon-scientist and emerging clinician-scientist to make a transformative impact on care of severely injured patients at USA Medical Center."

Dr. Gillespie said basic science efforts discovered a new biomarker and provided the proof-of-concept that it might be involved in multi-organ failure. Dr. Simmons' work extended these observations into severely injured patients, showing that the new concept was likely valid, and he is now planning to test a re-purposed drug with a proven safety record as a means of preventing multi-organ failure. This process - of taking laboratory discoveries and extending them to human patients - is collectively called "translational medicine."

"When Dr. Simmons has an idea that has potential to improve patient care, he is absolutely relentless about determining whether the idea has merit," Dr. Gillespie added. "It is physician-scientists like Dr. Simmons who are often responsible in catalyzing real advances in medicine."

According to Dr. Simmons, the research ongoing at USA holds far-reaching potential to improve trauma care by developing new diagnostic strategies and drugs to treat multiple organ system failure after severe injury. The research partnership between Drs. Simmons and Gillespie has resulted in the development of new medications and the repurposing of older ones to treat this inflammatory response.

He also added that his research is an extension of other projects on-going at the USA Medical Center, noting that "as a Level 1 trauma center at an academic hospital, we take care of the most complex cases in the region. It is our goal never to miss an opportunity to improve outcomes in this vulnerable patient population."

Dr. Richards said serving as Dr. Simmons' mentor means guiding him through the process of learning how to be an independent investigator. This includes reading through his research proposals, making critical comments and advising on how to

overcome hurdles that block scientific progress.

Because the competition to obtain funding from NIH has gotten very difficult, Dr. Richards said Dr. Simmons is to be heartedly congratulated on his efforts and perseverance to obtain the award. "Jon has outlined a plan of study to hone his research skills during the next five years in order to compete for NIH grant funding as an independent investigator. I have every expectation that Jon will be successful and that furthermore his research will ultimately led to dramatic improvements in survival."

Dr. Simmons said the K08 grant is unique because it creates a clinician-scientist environment where the flow of information goes back and forth, accelerating the research process. According to Dr. Simmons, the grant validates the important work USA does in caring for trauma patients and is an important step in improving the care for trauma patients across the world.

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