

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, August 25, 2016

Winners of Clyde G. 'Sid' Huggins Medical Student Research Awards Announced



Pictured from left: Dr. Jon Simmons, associate professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine and a trauma critical care surgeon at USA Medical Center; second-year medical student Jonathon Whitehead; Dr. Michael Chinkers, associate professor of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine; second-year medical student Connor Kimbrell; and Dr. Mary Townsley, professor of physiology and cell biology. Whitehead and Kimbrell were awarded this year's Clyde G. 'Sid' Huggins Medical Student Research Award.

The University of South Alabama College of Medicine hosted its 43rd annual Medical Student Research Day on July 29, 2016. More than 40 student research projects were presented at the event.

The Clyde G. 'Sid' Huggins Medical Student Research Awards, honoring the memory of Dr. Huggins, were presented to Jonathon Whitehead and Connor Kimbrell. Dr. Huggins served as the first dean of students for USA's College of Medicine.

Whitehead, a second-year medical student at USA, was recognized for the best oral presentation, titled "Burn-Wound Analysis in the Far Infrared." Whitehead was sponsored by Dr. Jon Simmons, assistant professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine and trauma surgeon in the division of trauma/critical care at USA, and Dr. Wiltz Wagner, professor of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine.

Whitehead's project helped him gain knowledge about the use of infrared thermal technology to assess second-degree burns. Not only could information learned during the course of this project increase the accuracy of diagnosing second-degree burns, but the technology also could potentially increase the speed of diagnosis, reduce the length of patient hospital stays and increase the quality of patient care in the future.

According to Whitehead, one of the most valuable elements of his research

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- 2023 (10)
- 2022 (249)
- 2021 (269)
- 2020 (191)
- 2019 (245)
- 2018 (236)
- 2017 (231)
- ▼ 2016 (206)
 - 12/18 - 12/25 (1)
 - 12/11 - 12/18 (3)
 - 12/04 - 12/11 (5)
 - 11/27 - 12/04 (4)
 - 11/20 - 11/27 (1)
 - 11/13 - 11/20 (3)
 - 11/06 - 11/13 (4)
 - 10/30 - 11/06 (4)
 - 10/23 - 10/30 (4)
 - 10/16 - 10/23 (4)
 - 10/09 - 10/16 (4)
 - 10/02 - 10/09 (4)
 - 09/25 - 10/02 (4)
 - 09/18 - 09/25 (4)
 - 09/11 - 09/18 (4)
 - 09/04 - 09/11 (4)
 - 08/28 - 09/04 (5)
 - ▼ 08/21 - 08/28 (4)
 - Winners of Clyde G. 'Sid' Huggins Medical Student ...
 - USA Welcomes Dr. Osama Abdul-Rahim
 - Students Participate in DREAM Program to Prepare f...
 - USA Welcomes Dr. Phillip Henderson
- 08/14 - 08/21 (4)

project was learning how to think critically from Dr. Wagner and Edward Crockett, a graduate student in the department of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine. "In medical school, because of the huge amount of information you are required to remember every week, it is easy to fall into the trap of memorizing information instead of critically thinking," Whitehead said. "Dr. Wagner and Ed continually challenged me to ask questions and delve into my creativity and instinct for the answers."

Whitehead said Dr. Simmons also played a vital role, impacting the direction and progression of his project. "Dr. Simmons was the backbone of this project," Whitehead said. "He was passionate about the practical use of the technology, and this passion radiated to the other surgeons in the field. His excitement fueled this project and opened the doors of possibility."

Kimbrell, also a second-year medical student at USA, was recognized for the best poster presentation, titled "Depletion of Mitochondrial DNA: Impact on Mitochondrial Volume Density, Bioenergetics, and CA2+ Signaling in Lung Microvascular Endothelium." Kimbrell was sponsored by Dr. Mary Townsley, assistant dean for faculty affairs and professor of physiology at the USA College of Medicine, and Dr. Mikhail Alexeyev, assistant professor of cell biology and neuroscience at USA.

Kimbrell's project examined mitochondrial depletion and the effect it has on cellular calcium movement. Kimbrell said his research is important because it is an attempt to better understand the role mitochondria play in regulating cellular calcium movement in relation to specific ion channels that are in turn related to specific physiological functions. "We were looking to see if disrupting mitochondria would cause signals indicative of calcium accumulation to spread further apart in cells," he said.

Kimbrell said he is thankful for this research program, as it gave him the opportunity to better understand research problems and techniques, which will equip him in his future career. "I had a chance to network with different researchers and professionals, learn new lab methods and techniques, broaden my knowledge in general and refine my writing and presentation skills," he said.

The regular interaction with professional mentors is considered one of the advantages of the 10-week program. "Dr. Townsley and Dr. Alexeyev served as constant sources of constructive criticism and guidance in performing experiments," Kimbrell said. "They were invaluable sponsors to have, and it was an honor to be allowed their time and resources to explore this project with them," Kimbrell said.

During the 10-week summer program, first- and second-year medical students participate in research projects with basic science and clinical faculty in the College of Medicine. Students present their research projects either orally or on poster at the culmination of the summer research program where they are judged by COM faculty on the presentations. Winners are given a plaque and a cash award of \$100 each.

[Click here](#) to learn more about this year's event.

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- [08/07 - 08/14](#) (4)
- [07/31 - 08/07](#) (5)
- [07/24 - 07/31](#) (3)
- [07/17 - 07/24](#) (5)
- [07/10 - 07/17](#) (5)
- [07/03 - 07/10](#) (4)
- [06/26 - 07/03](#) (3)
- [06/19 - 06/26](#) (6)
- [06/12 - 06/19](#) (4)
- [06/05 - 06/12](#) (5)
- [05/29 - 06/05](#) (5)
- [05/22 - 05/29](#) (4)
- [05/15 - 05/22](#) (4)
- [05/08 - 05/15](#) (5)
- [05/01 - 05/08](#) (4)
- [04/24 - 05/01](#) (4)
- [04/17 - 04/24](#) (4)
- [04/10 - 04/17](#) (3)
- [04/03 - 04/10](#) (5)
- [03/27 - 04/03](#) (4)
- [03/20 - 03/27](#) (2)
- [03/13 - 03/20](#) (8)
- [03/06 - 03/13](#) (3)
- [02/28 - 03/06](#) (5)
- [02/21 - 02/28](#) (4)
- [02/14 - 02/21](#) (4)
- [02/07 - 02/14](#) (4)
- [01/31 - 02/07](#) (4)
- [01/24 - 01/31](#) (4)
- [01/17 - 01/24](#) (4)
- [01/10 - 01/17](#) (4)
- [01/03 - 01/10](#) (4)
- [2015](#) (205)
- [2014](#) (241)
- [2013](#) (232)
- [2012](#) (245)
- [2011](#) (262)
- [2010](#) (247)
- [2009](#) (88)

USA Welcomes Dr. Osama Abdul-Rahim



Dr. Osama Abdul-Rahim recently was appointed assistant professor of radiology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and will serve as an interventional radiologist with USA Physicians Group.

Dr. Abdul-Rahim earned his medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, Pa. He completed his residency training in diagnostic radiology at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pa., and a fellowship in interventional radiology at the University of Miami.

Dr. Abdul-Rahim is a member of the Society of Interventional Radiology and Syrian American Medical Society.

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Students Participate in DREAM Program to Prepare for Medical School



University of South Alabama College of Medicine DREAM Program students Rosa Gomez and Uriel Rose work in the Patient Simulation Lab during the DREAM program this summer.

Several undergraduate students from across the region recently completed the University of South Alabama Diversity Recruitment and Enrichment for Admission into Medicine (DREAM) program, preparing them for the rigors of medical school. The highly competitive eight-week program provides a specially designed, comprehensive learning experience for underrepresented economically and educationally disadvantaged premedical students during the two summers prior to their junior and senior undergraduate years.

"The idea of the DREAM program is based on Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote 'dare to dream,'" said Dr. Hattie Myles, assistant dean at the USA College of Medicine. "Many students do not think about the possibility that they could become physicians because of their environment, where they come from or their educational background. We provide the necessary encouragement, support, assistance and education enrichment for our students to dream and dream big. If they work hard those dreams can come true."

Uriel Rose, a rising senior at Alabama State University (ASU), completed Phase II of the DREAM program this summer. Majoring in biology pre-health with a minor in chemistry, Rose moved to Montgomery in 2013 from Manchester, Jamaica, in search of new opportunities. "Since we are a third-world country we have our share of problems, one of which is finding employment after your studies," Rose said. "I am here to try and achieve the American dream in order to support myself and my family back home."

Rose credits an accident during his freshman year of high school for sparking his interest in medicine. "I was standing on a tree trunk holding on to a fence when I lost my balance," Rose said. "A wire pierced the palm of my hand to my middle finger." His friends panicked while he remained very calm, pondering how he was

going to handle the situation. "I acquired a blade from a pencil sharpener and freed my hand," he said. Prior to the incident, Rose said he wanted to become a pilot.

Years later, Dr. Myles visited ASU and introduced Rose to the DREAM program. Instantly, Rose said he became fascinated with the program and with USA. Rose also received advice about the program from his cousin, Duston Hamilton, an alumnus of the USA College of Medicine.

According to Rose, the DREAM program is not only beneficial for aspiring physicians to achieve their goals, but it also prepares students for upcoming undergraduate courses. "After completing phase I of the program last summer, physics was extremely easy for me at ASU," he said. Rose plans to attend medical school to become a trauma or orthopaedic surgeon.

Fredrick Chambers, a senior at USA, also recently completed Phase II of the program. Majoring in health sciences, Chambers is a native of Mobile, Ala. Like Rose, Chambers accidentally discovered his love for the medical field because of an injury. "I tore my ACL in high school and was required to have surgery," Chambers said. "Going through the entire process of X-rays, MRIs and surgery was very exciting to me, despite the fact that I was the one being operated on."

According to Chambers, Phase I of the program consists of full MCAT prep courses with full-length practice exams, physician medical seminars and clinical case studies. Phase II offered the same aspects as phase I, while incorporating hands-on medical simulation with computerized mannequins and shadowing.

"I cannot emphasize enough how much of an honor and privilege it is to be accepted into this program," Chambers said. "Ultimately, I want to pursue medicine here at South and become an orthopaedic surgeon."

Chambers said he highly recommends the DREAM program to undergraduate students who are serious about becoming a physician. "There are only 12 spots so it is extremely necessary to keep your grades up throughout your undergraduate journey," he said. "Getting accepted into this program is just as competitive as applying to the entering class of any medical school. The DREAM program is not a walk in the park and you will have to work hard to be invited back to Phase II."

A native of Moundville, Ala., Savanna Wooley said the DREAM program was a life-changing experience. Wooley first became interested in a career in medicine when her aunt's health problems caused her to frequently stay in the hospital. As she watched the doctors care for her aunt, Wooley said she quickly realized that she also wanted to help others.

"I knew I wanted to be a doctor - I just didn't know how to reach that goal," she said. Wooley's adviser at the University of West Alabama in Livingston introduced her to the DREAM Program and urged her to apply. "I knew that I had nothing to lose with this program," Wooley said. "I just didn't know at the time how much I would gain."

Ultimately, Wooley credits the DREAM Program for helping her make her dreams a reality. She said she plans to attend medical school at South, with the hopes of becoming a family medicine physician. "The DREAM Program helped me shape these plans because I have fallen in love with South, its campus and Mobile over the last two summers," Wooley said.

The USA DREAM program was first developed in 1986 as the Biomedical Enrichment and Recruitment (BEAR) program. The major goal of the program was to introduce, expose and encourage disadvantaged and underrepresented students to consider careers in medicine. In 2008, the program became the DREAM program with a primary shift in focus from first-year medical school introduction to intense preparation for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).

Twelve students per year are selected from around the state of Alabama and its contiguous states to participate in the eight-week program over two consecutive summers with the ultimate opportunity to earn a seat in USA's medical school

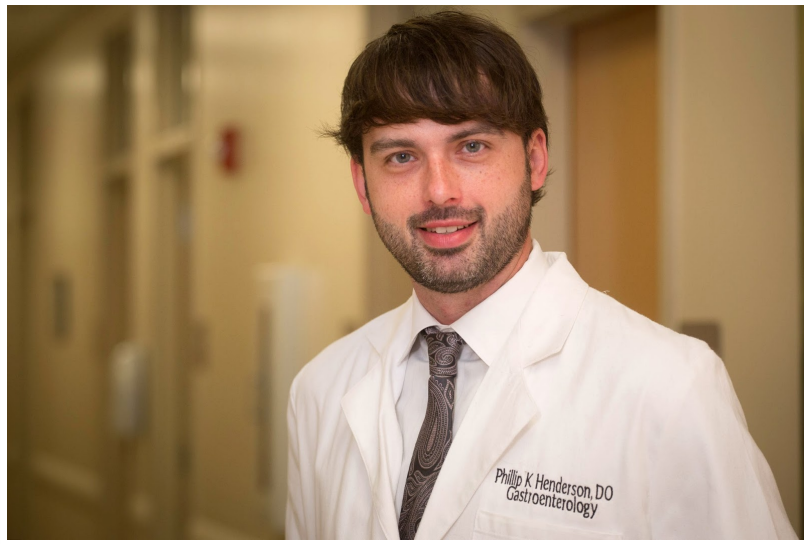
class. Applications are scrupulously reviewed with the applicant's demonstrated career interest, efforts, commitment and qualifications considered. Qualified Alabama residents are given priority for acceptance. Within the program, students gain knowledge through daily instruction and review of the basic sciences and topics that make up the MCAT. Team-based learning and clinical case seminar activities, weekly examinations, reading comprehension and critical thinking are utilized in homework and classroom assignments.

Learn more about the DREAM program [here](#).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [8:48 AM](#) No comments:

Tuesday, August 23, 2016

USA Welcomes Dr. Phillip Henderson



Dr. Phillip Henderson recently was appointed assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and will serve as a gastroenterologist and hepatologist with USA Physicians Group.

Dr. Henderson earned his medical degree from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2009. He then completed his residency training in internal medicine and a fellowship in gastroenterology at USA. While at USA, he served as the chief medical resident. Dr. Henderson went on to complete fellowship training in transplant hepatology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). He holds a joint faculty position as an assistant professor of surgery in the division of transplant surgery at UAB.

He is a member of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, American College of Gastroenterology and American College of Physicians. His clinical interests include general gastroenterology and transplant hepatology. Dr. Henderson has recently begun a joint liver transplant clinic with the University of Alabama division of transplant surgery. He is now accepting new patients.

To make an appointment with Dr. Henderson, call (251) 660-5555.

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