

Med School Watercooler

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

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USA Medical Students Present at 14th Annual AMA Research Symposium



USA medical students (from left) Mazen Omar, Vikash Pernenkil, Maelynn La, Jordan Nickols and Lauren Chastain present original research at the 2016 American Medical Association Research Symposium.

Five medical students at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently presented at the 2016 American Medical Association (AMA) Research Symposium in Orlando, Fla.

At the symposium, second-year medical students—Vikash Pernenkil, Mazen Omar, Lauren Chastain and Maelynn La, and third-year medical student Jordan Nickols—had the opportunity to showcase their original research to AMA members.

Vikash Pernenkil chose the topic “Trends in Smoking and Obesity Among U.S. Adults Before, During and After the Great Recession and Affordable Care Act Roll-Out.” He said his research is important because smoking and obesity are two preventable health risk factors that contribute significantly to morbidity and mortality in our country.

“Presenting research at a conference like this is a great opportunity to inform others who may be able to take this epidemiological information and implement it to improve the lives of patients,” Pernenkil said.

Lauren Chastain’s research explored the perceptions of diabetic patients toward their chronic disease and their knowledge concerning Self-Monitoring Blood Glucose (SMBG). Traditional SMBG involves checking their blood sugar a few times a day to track their glycemic control.

Chastain said she chose this topic because she is very interested in the public

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health, patient satisfaction and educational aspect of medicine. "Understanding patient perspectives can promote meaningful dialogue to foster compliance with prescribed self-management routines," she said.

"Diabetes is a growing epidemic both in the United States and worldwide, so knowing how to best educate and successfully work with patients is vital."

Omar, another second-year medical student at USA, chose the topic "Association of Stress Test Findings with the Presence and Extent of Coronary Artery Disease in Patients with vs. without Diabetes."

Through his research, Omar concluded that diabetic patients with an abnormal stress test are more likely to have coronary artery disease than a non-diabetic patient. "There are currently no separate guidelines for giving diabetic patients stress tests," Omar said. "However, this research shows that there is a need to do so."

Although this project was her first presentation as a medical student, Maelynn La said she had substantial research experience while earning her undergraduate degree at USA. La presented her research on "The Association of Nonspecific T Wave Abnormalities with Ischemic Heart Disease."

"Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, with many of those deaths preventable," La said. "I knew that I wanted to contribute to the efforts of preventing heart disease with my research project to identify early findings of heart disease on ECG."

Jordan Nickols presented his research on "Lipopolysaccharide Induced Pulmonary Endothelial Barrier Disruption and Lung Edema: Critical Role for Bicarbonate Stimulation of AC10."

Nickols said the conference brought about excitement for what the future might hold. "It was a great experience to meet like-minded medical students from across the country who were excited about making a difference in medicine through their research, and for others, through their involvement with AMA and the establishment of policies in the medical field," he said.

The AMA Research Symposium is hosted annually by the AMA Student Sections, Resident and Fellow Section and the International Medical Graduates Section. To learn more about the AMA Research Symposium, [click here](#).

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Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming Town Hall Meetings



Dr. John Marymont, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean of the College of Medicine, invites all faculty and staff of the College of Medicine and USA Health to join him at a Town Hall Meeting on Nov. 28, 2016, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Atlantis Room at USA Children's & Women's Hospital.

A second Town Hall Meeting will be held for all College of Medicine and USA Health faculty and staff on Nov. 29, 2016, from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the USA Medical Center Conference Center.

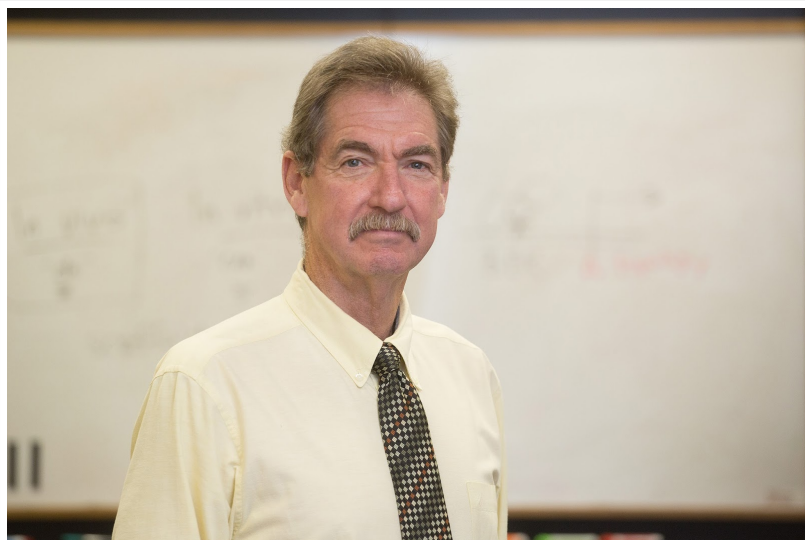
These meetings will provide an opportunity for faculty and staff to ask questions and meet with USA President Dr. Tony Waldrop and Dr. Marymont.

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USA Translational Research Service Center Provides Research Support



Dr. Mark Gillespie, professor and chair of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine, is site principle investigator for a Clinical and Translational Sciences Award.

A team at the University of South Alabama is providing research support services to USA researchers through its Translational Research Service Center (TRSC).

The Center is supported by UAB's Clinical and Translational Sciences Award (CTSA) from the National Institutes of Health. The USA College of Medicine is one of 11 institutions in the southeast – including five academic medical centers – that is a partner on the award.

One of the key goals of the CTSA is to facilitate translational research, which is a field of medical science aimed at translating basic laboratory discoveries into improved patient care. As the region's only academic medical center, USA's state-of-the-art medical research laboratories and clinics are well positioned to lead this effort.

The TRSC team plays a key role in this initiative and is comprised of basic and clinical science researchers and administrators that provide research support services and facilitate training, professional development and collaboration. The team brings expertise in informatics, statistical analysis and research design, clinical research support and community engagement resources to USA researchers.

The award provides funding for a wide range of services and activities, converging on its central mission to address disparities and diseases disproportionately represented within the Deep South by accelerating discoveries to improve human health.

"We want our affiliation with the CCTS to help capitalize on USA's position as the Gulf Coast's academic medical center through our commitment to translational research, as well as our mission to improve healthcare to underserved populations in our community," said Dr. Mark Gillespie, CTSA site principle investigator, as well as professor and chair of the department of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine.

"There are many underserved populations here on the coast, and we are in a position to impact not only the health of the population, but also the health of the economy," Dr. Gillespie said. "For example, if we could lower the frequency of chronic disease in these populations, this would have a dramatic effect on the health and health-economy across the spectrum."

There are many opportunities for students, fellows, residents and faculty to bring their ideas for research to the TRSC. Dr. Gillespie encourages members of the USA Health community to reach out to the TRSC if they have ideas for clinical research. "All they need to have is the beginning of an idea, and the TRSC team

will help grow it into a good plan of action.”

The TRSC also offers many educational opportunities at USA. Training through the networks that the CCTS supports is available to students, fellows, residents and faculty online and through sabbaticals at the CCTS. “All of the opportunities for training and research help to make our students and faculty rise above the competition in healthcare,” Dr. Gillespie said. “We are the only institution in our community that does translational research, and we will provide students and faculty with resources they need to be the best.”

For more information about the USA TRSC, [click here](#).

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