

# Med School Watercooler

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

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

## University of South Alabama Named to Alabama's Regional Autism Network



Amy Mitchell, a speech-language pathologist in developmental/behavioral pediatrics at USA Health, and Dr. Hanes Swingle, professor of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a developmental/behavioral pediatrician with USA Physicians Group, pose for a photo Dec. 14, 2016. USA has been named one of three universities in the Alabama Regional Autism Network, which provides support for people with autism spectrum disorders.

The University of South Alabama has been named one of three universities in the Alabama Regional Autism Network, or ARAN, which launched in October.

The Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC) established the ARAN to facilitate a lifelong system of care and support for people with autism spectrum disorders. The Alabama legislature provided USA with initial funding of \$75,000 to establish the network.

Amy Mitchell, a speech-language pathologist in developmental/behavioral pediatrics at USA Health, said the network was created to empower those who have autism spectrum disorders, as well as their families and care providers. "As part of this network, we are here to help people of all ages find resources and general information about autism spectrum disorders," she said. "We'll do everything we can to help everyone we can."

The network connects families to services in-state, including local agencies and school districts. Although the network itself will not provide direct services to individuals with an autism spectrum disorder, it will provide individual and direct family assistance, technical support and consultation, professional training and public education programs to increase awareness about autism and autism-related disabilities.

"Ultimately, we are matching available resources with individuals' needs," Mitchell said. "The network is a virtual 'one-stop shop' for information, referrals and

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advising about what's available in the community."

The USA Regional Autism Network (RAN), which serves Mobile, Baldwin, Washington, Clarke, Monroe, Conecuh and Escambia Counties, joins the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Auburn University to make up the Alabama Regional Autism Network. There is a plan for the University of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Huntsville to join the network in the near future.

According to Mitchell, USA has a long history of working with children with developmental disabilities, including autism. Dr. Hanes Swingle, professor of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a developmental/behavioral pediatrician with USA Physicians Group, was one of the original appointed members of AIACC. "His leadership and involvement in AIACC has really put USA on the map state-wide for autism services," Mitchell said.

USA also formed an Autism Interest Group in 2009, which meets every quarter to share information about activities relevant to autism that are being conducted in each of the colleges. This has resulted in opportunities for inter-departmental research, teaching and service collaboration.

When the Regional Autism Network became a reality, faculty members from each of the colleges represented in the USA Autism Interest Group (Education, Arts & Sciences, Allied Health, Nursing and Medicine) volunteered to form an advisory committee to help in the planning and implementation of the USA RAN.

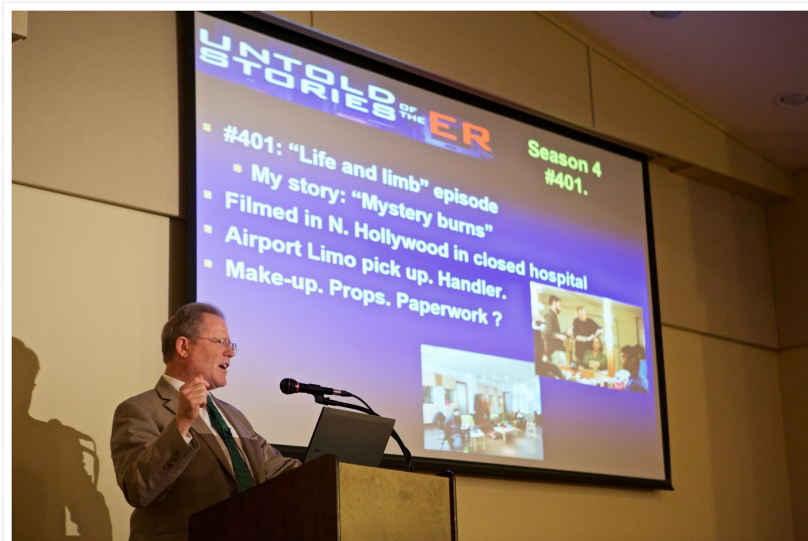
The USA Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics operates an Autism Diagnostic Clinic on the campus of USA Children's & Women's Hospital at the Strada Patient Care Center. The mission of the clinic is to improve the lives of children with autism spectrum disorders in the greater Gulf Coast area through early identification and diagnosis, as well as to provide educational outreach to those who serve children in the community.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, around 1 percent of the world's population has an autism diagnosis, with an estimated one in 68 children in the United States identified with autism spectrum disorder. The number of individuals diagnosed with the disorder in the United States has increased by nearly 120 percent since 2000, making it the fastest-growing developmental disability and an urgent public health care need.

To learn more about resources available in our community for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, call the USA RAN at (251) 410-4533.

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## Med School Café- Expert Advice for the Community



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Dr. Edward Panacek, professor and chair of emergency medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, presented the November Med School Café lecture titled "I'm an Emergency Physician and I Play One on TV."

Dr. Panacek discussed his role in the Discovery Life Channel show, *Untold Stories of the ER*, and his role in the department of emergency medicine at USA.

Med School Cafe is a free community lecture series sponsored by 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.

Watch the video below to view the lecture in its entirety.

Med School Cafe - "I'm an Emergency Physician and I Play One on TV" from USA Health on Vimeo.

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## USA Welcomes Dr. Wadad Mneimneh

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

Dr. Mneimneh earned her medical degree from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon. In 2004, she completed her residency training in anatomic pathology at Hotel-Dieu de France Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon. She then completed a fellowship in anatomic pathology focusing on gastrointestinal, liver, thoracic and hematopathology in France.



After moving to the United States, Dr. Mneimneh completed her second residency training in anatomic and clinical pathology at Albany Medical Center in Albany, N.Y. She then completed a fellowship in surgical pathology with a focus on gastrointestinal and liver pathology at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Ind., and a fellowship in pulmonary and surgical pathology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

She is a member of the United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology and the Pulmonary Pathology Society.

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

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