

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, December 17, 2009

USA Pulmonary Hypertension Patient Highlighted



Katie Lessard was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension (PH) in 2007, while she was an active duty Navy helicopter pilot. She began having symptoms one year before her diagnosis, but several lung function tests continuously came back normal. It was a stress test - where she ran on a treadmill and was monitored using an echocardiogram - that revealed the PH diagnosis. Within eight months of the diagnosis and after nine years of serving, she medically retired from the military.

In 2008, shortly after her diagnosis, Lessard married a military pilot. Although her life had taken a completely different turn, she was still able to be a part of something she loved so much. "I miss the military sometimes," she said. "I'm still married to it, though, so it's not completely gone."

Lessard said the initial diagnosis was extremely depressing. "Most of the information out there on PH is not very positive." However, with the help of USA's Pulmonary Hypertension Center, Lessard has overcome many of her medical obstacles. She is currently on multiple therapies, including continuous IV therapy. At USA's Center, she completes six-minute walk tests, echocardiograms and other evaluations. She said the center is great for her because, as a Florida resident, there is nothing in her area for people with PH.

"It's so nice to have a doctor that listens to you and is very supportive," she said. "Dr. Fagan made me believe that this hurdle was possible to overcome, and she has always had a very positive attitude about the disease."

Lessard said the entire situation has had a lot of positives. "It slowed my life down. It has helped me appreciate the moment a lot more," she said. "Before I was diagnosed, I was always thinking about tomorrow ... everything was rushed."

Lessard said raising awareness for PH is extremely important. "People may not necessarily look sick, but they may not be able to do as much as they want to. It is very important to be diagnosed really early in life, and many people don't understand what PH even is. Awareness will help."

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To read the Katie's story published in the Mobile Press-Register, follow this link - http://blog.al.com/live/2009/12/pulmonary_hypertension_usa_doc.html .

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December Med School Cafe' Draws Enthusiastic Crowd




On December 16th, Dr. Hattie M. Myles, assistant dean for student affairs and educational enrichment, gave a community lecture titled "The Past and Future of African American Physicians in Mobile" at the Mobile Museum of Art.

In her talk, Dr. Myles discussed the many contributions made by African American physicians throughout Mobile's history. She also highlighted the success of programs at the USA College of Medicine designed to encourage diversity in healthcare.

The lecture will be available online at www.southalabama.edu/usahealthsystem/medschoolcafe.html early next week.



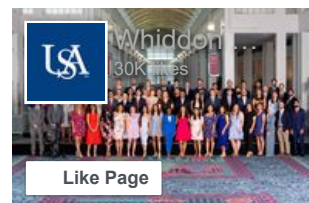
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Educational Technologies and Services Announces New Employees



Lynda Touart (**standing**) was recently appointed as the medical illustrator for the University of South Alabama's College of Medicine. As medical illustrator, she will collaborate with faculty and students to transform complex information into visual

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images to promote education, research, patient care, public relations and marketing efforts.

Touart has been a medical illustrator for the COM before, and has now returned to the college. She has an MFA from Florida State University, is experienced in graphics software as well as by-hand illustration, and will serve as a coordinating presence between several types of output. Touart will be working out of the Medical Sciences Building.

Matt Myers (**seated**) was recently appointed as the audio-visual production specialist. Myers will be producing educational programs through the use of audio-visual equipment. He will also assist and instruct users with setup, delivery and maintenance of production equipment and programs.

Myers graduated from East Tennessee State University with a degree in mass communications and marketing. He has shot and edited video for WPMI and Waterman Broadcasting, among others. Myers will be working out of the Mastin Building.

The department of educational technologies and services coordinates quality improvement of education by providing support and development to COM faculty and students. Educational support includes designing and developing instructional materials and methodologies, keeping up-to-date with innovative technological advancements, and developing assessment strategies. Educational support is provided for all COM educational departments (i.e. medical education, continuing medical education, graduate and residency programs).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:36 PM](#) No comments: 

Enjoy The Holidays...without "Heartbreak"



Heart disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. In the winter months, especially around the holidays, the risk of developing heart disease increases by 30 percent. Dr. Clara Massey, professor of internal medicine and director of the division of cardiology at the University of South Alabama, has some important advice on how to keep your holidays heart healthy.

People typically tend to eat and drink more during the holidays. Dr. Massey gives several tips on how to counterbalance this increase in consumption:

- Avoid overeating.
- Use smaller plates – they trick your mind into thinking you are eating more.
- Divide your plate into fourths – one-fourth protein, one-fourth carbohydrates, one-fourth fruits and one-fourth vegetables.
- Don't linger at the buffet or in the kitchen. Instead, focus on socialization.
- Don't skip meals, especially on party days.
- Take healthy snacks when holiday shopping to avoid excessive hunger.


Dr. Massey said everyone's stress level rises during the holiday season. In many ways, stress impacts your cardiovascular health. "Stress also increases the body's effort to hold onto calories," she said. "The body stores more calories because it needs to respond to the stress."

To combat stress, Dr. Massey said it is important to feel good at least once a day. "Exercise is a great stress buster because it increases energy and decreases stress," she said. "Even 15 minutes a day helps your heart – walk the dog, go caroling or take a stroll in the neighborhood and look at lights and decorations by foot." Dr. Massey also emphasizes the importance of getting enough sleep. An adequate amount of sleep boosts your heart health and reduces stress.

If you are traveling with heart disease this holiday season, there are a few extra steps you should take:

- Keep a list of all drugs you are taking (use generic names and indicate dosages).
- Have a copy of an electrocardiogram.
- Have the name of and contact information for your physician.
- Pack and carry enough of each medication to cover the length of the trip.
- If you are flying, stay hydrated. Move around at least once every hour you are on the plane to prevent blood clots.
- If you have a pacemaker or defibrillator with you, check with your cardiologist to determine if airline security magnets will interfere with the device.
- When you arrive at your destination, pace yourself and avoid strenuous activity for about an hour after arrival.

Also important, Massey said, the holidays provide an opportunity to chat with family about specific family medical history. "The holidays are a wonderful opportunity for people to see what their cardiovascular risks are," she said. "It's also a great time to discuss risk management with family members." To help record and organize your family medical history, visit <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>.

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Q&A with USA Med Student Sarah Beth Hill



Sarah Beth Hill, a second year medical student at the University of South Alabama, won \$123,000 in scholarship money at the Dr. Pepper Football Championship Challenge at the SEC Championship game on Dec. 5.

We recently caught up with Hill, and here's what she had to say about her big win.

Q: What did the experience teach you?

A: I learned that people actually do win those random contests. I can't tell you how many times I've entered drawings, contests, etc., but I've never won anything. I've also been amazed at how far-reaching this is. People I barely know -- or complete strangers! -- have contacted me to say how excited they were when they watched the contest.

Q: Any competitive advantages being medical student?

A: I think the biggest advantage that med school provided was in handling the pressure. I've really learned how to tune out distractions and focus on the task at hand. Also, USA Football Coach Brendt Bedsole says I'm "very coachable," and I

attribute that quality to being a professional student.

Q: What has winning the competition changed and not changed?

A: It's a strange thing. The money goes directly to the University, so my bank account is just as meager as it ever was. Since I don't pay tuition out of pocket anyway (it's all student loans), the money doesn't really affect my day-to-day budgeting, etc. I know it will make a huge difference when I graduate with little-to-no loan burden, but for now it's still kind of surreal.

Q: In an article, it said you had to return on Monday to take a test – how do you think you did?

A: I had to take a final exam in Microbiology & Immunology. Those grades are not in yet, but I felt like I did fairly well. I studied as much as I could during the trip and all day on Sunday when we returned to Mobile. (Plus, my undergraduate degree is in Microbiology. That helped.)

Q: Do people recognize you when you go shopping, or out and about?

A: While we were still in Atlanta, I got recognized a lot -- several people even asked to snap pictures with their cell phones. In Mobile, I've been recognized a few times, mostly on campus. One lady did stop me at Wal-Mart and say, "I saw you on YouTube! How did you drink so much Dr. Pepper without burping!" (Answer: most of the drinking in the video is simulated, and the cans are empty.) I did get a note from a USA surgeon, as well as a letter from the Chamber of Commerce, congratulating me. Coach Bedsole reports that he's been recognized as well (he was in a lot of the news footage).

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

A: I could not have done this without the help of the Jags football staff, especially Coach Bedsole. The support from the medical school has been amazing (especially COM 2012 -- several classmates gave up valuable study time to help with preparations), and I am so honored to represent them!

To view a video of Sarah Beth Hill interviewed on ESPN about her win, visit www.southalabama.edu/com/espn.wmv .

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