

# Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, January 14, 2011

## Kimberly Bryan Second Recipient of Regan Robinson Scholarship



Kimberly Bryan, a fourth-year medical student at the University of South Alabama, was recently honored with her selection as the second recipient of the Regan Robinson Scholarship, created by the class of 2009 to honor the memory of a medical student who passed away.

Before entering medical school, Bryan received her nursing degree at USA and later worked as a nurse in the intensive care unit at the USA Medical Center. During that time, she returned to school to pursue her graduate degree in nursing.

Now, Bryan is using her nursing background to help her succeed in medical school. "The nursing track helped me understand the importance of taking care of patients and has really helped me become a well-rounded physician," she said.

Bryan was selected for the Regan Robinson Scholarship in part because of the service she participates in outside of the classroom. "I've always loved volunteering," she said. "I like to help people. It's my nature to do so."

Bryan served for two years as logistics chair for the USA Gumbo Chili Showdown, an event that supports the Regan Robinson Scholarship. Prior to medical school she organized the Kidney Early Evaluation Program, which was responsible for screening patients for kidney disease. In addition, Bryan has helped coordinate seminars for local dialysis patients and has supported the Transplant Olympics.

"My main interest is nephrology," Bryan said. "I like the challenge, as well as the continuity. I look forward to working with these patients over time and helping them manage their illness."

The Regan Robinson Young Scholarship was created in memory of Regan Robinson, a medical student at USA who was diagnosed with advanced colon cancer in 2003 at the age of 23. She used her own experience to help others cope with illness. In 2007, just months before her graduation from medical school, Regan passed away. Her empathetic spirit and drive to continue medical school while completing chemotherapy made her an inspiration to fellow students, faculty and staff. The scholarship provides assistance to a rising senior medical student who embodies Regan's spirit and character.

Bryan said she was honored to receive an award that recognizes Robinson's qualities in others. "I like to stay behind the scenes, but to be recognized was really nice," she said. "Regan had a difficult plight, and it is very humbling to be recognized in her honor."

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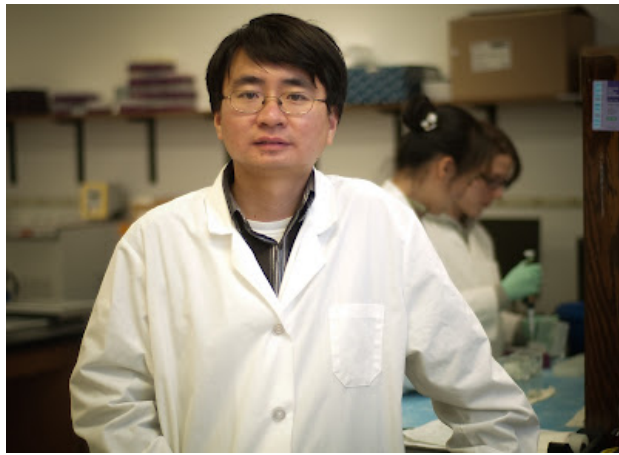
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This year's Gumbo Chili Showdown is slated for March 26. For more information, contact Katy Lalor at [klalor@gmail.com](mailto:klalor@gmail.com).

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## Dr. Wensheng Lin Awarded Research Grant



Dr. Wensheng Lin, assistant professor of cell biology and neuroscience at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, has been awarded a research grant by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The three-year award totals \$412,500.


Dr. Lin's research focuses on multiple sclerosis (MS), a chronic autoimmune disease that attacks the central nervous system, which is made up of the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision.

MS is caused by damage to the myelin sheath, the protective covering that surrounds nerve cells. The damaged myelin forms scar tissue, or sclerosis. When any part of the myelin sheath or nerve fiber is damaged or destroyed, nerve impulses traveling to and from the brain and spinal cord are distorted or interrupted. MS is a progressive disease, meaning the nerve damage worsens over time.

"The ultimate goal of our study is to understand the role of the PERK-eIF2 alpha pathway involved in MS," Dr. Lin said. "The pathway is important for nerve cell survival under conditions associated with sclerosis."

Dr. Lin said there is currently no known cure for MS. "There are some treatments for MS that target immune response, but these current treatments have little impact on the progression of disability," he said. "The knowledge gained from this unique research will have important implications for understanding the pathogenesis, or development, of multiple sclerosis. Our findings may lead to therapeutic strategies useful in protecting the cells by targeting the PERK- eIF2 alpha pathway."

The National MS Society is a driving force of MS research, supporting and stimulating world-class research into ways to prevent, better treat and cure the unpredictable disease. The society helps people affected by MS by driving change through advocacy, facilitating professional education, and providing programs and services that help them move their lives forward.

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## Retirement Reception Held For Gloria Deakle



From left: Patricia Couling, Ashley Turbeville, and Gloria Deakle

Gloria Deakle, an accounting clerk in the University of South Alabama College of Medicine business office, was honored with a retirement reception on Jan. 13, 2011. Deakle retired after 10 years of service with the university. She will continue to work part-time with the university beginning in late January.

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## Next Week's DSS - Dr. Nader G. Abraham



The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will be presented by Dr. Nader G. Abraham, professor and chair of physiology and pharmacology at the University of Ohio College of Medicine in Toledo, Ohio.


His seminar, titled "Stem Cells Defects in Metabolic Syndrome and Role of Heme Oxygenase and Adiponectin in Insulin Resistance," will take place January 20, 2011, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium on USA's main campus.

Research programs in Dr. Abraham's laboratory are focused on vascular dysfunction, which are a prelude to cardiovascular and metabolic diseases including hypertension, stroke, diabetes and obesity; the role of oxidative stress; inflammatory cytokines; and hypoadiponectinemia. One of the laboratory's research approaches represents a powerful tool to identify therapeutic strategies and novel biomarkers for cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.

Dr. Abraham received his doctorate degree in biomedical sciences from Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York. He completed post-doctoral work in pharmacology/metabolism at Rockefeller University, also in New York. In 2009, Dr. Abraham received an honorary doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Catania in Sicily, Italy.

For more information on Dr. Abraham, visit <http://www.utoledo.edu/med/depts/physpharm/faculty/abraham.html>

For additional information on the lecture, contact Natalie Kent at (251) 461-1548.

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