

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, January 17, 2013

USA College of Medicine's Class of 2014 learns how to stay safe when using social media



Bernell Dorrrough, web marketing coordinator for the USA College of Medicine, talks with medical students in the Class of 2014 during their first Rising Senior Meeting on Monday, January 14

Medical students in the University of South Alabama College of Medicine's Class of 2014 got a crash course in best practices for social media during their first Rising Senior Meeting on Monday, January 14. Bernell Dorrrough, web marketing coordinator for the College of Medicine and the USA Physicians Group, reminded students that posts on Facebook, Twitter and personal blogs always should be considered public.

"Many people, especially younger people who've been using social media their whole lives, think of it as a way to communicate with friends and family members," Dorrrough explained after his presentation. "But between complicated privacy settings and friends who could inadvertently or even intentionally share content against your wishes, you have to assume anyone could see what you post."

Dorrrough said this advice was particularly important for medical professionals because of the importance of maintaining patient confidentiality. Laws protecting private medical information, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), apply to all communications, including social media. A medical student might want to share about an exciting, fulfilling experience -- like observing a new procedure or helping to save a patient's life -- but even minor details could be used to identify the patient. Dorrrough said the best bet is to avoid posting about work at all.

In addition to being mindful of patient privacy, Dorrrough said medical students should maintain a professional presence online, just like anyone entering or already in the workforce.

"A photo showing you holding a beer at a summer barbecue probably isn't going to hurt your chances of getting a job," Dorrrough said. "But photos showing irresponsible behavior could hurt someone's impression of you, whether that's a residency director or a potential patient."

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Dorrrough also discouraged the students from joining heated political discussions online. He said "liking" the page of a political candidate was usually fine, but attacking the other candidate and his or her supporters could alienate people easily.

Another tip? Medical professionals should never "friend" patients on Facebook, or accept their requests, unless they have a separate page just for their practice.

The American Medical Association's policies and advice about social media are available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/socialmedia>.



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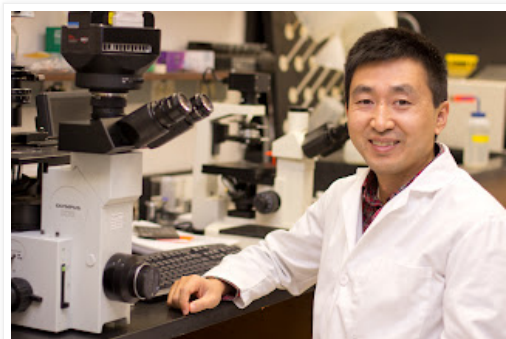
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USA College of Medicine Scientist Receives Grant from the American Heart Association



Dr. Xiangming Zha, assistant professor of cell biology and neuroscience at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, was recently awarded a Scientist Development Grant from the American Heart Association to study how pH levels contribute to stroke-induced brain damage. The four-year award totals \$308,000.

Dr. Zha explained that diseases in the nervous system cause brain tissue to become more acidic. His study focuses on the acid-sensing ion channels (ASICs), which are the channels that sense pH reduction in the brain.



A stroke occurs when the blood supply your brain is interrupted or severely reduced, depriving it of oxygen and food. Within minutes, brain cells begin to die. Depending on the region of the brain affected, a stroke may cause paralysis, speech impairment, loss of memory and reasoning ability, coma, or death.

"Previous studies have tested the ion channels by inhibiting them, which established the importance of the acid sensing ion channels," he said. "We want to see if the regulation of these channels specifically refer to where ASICs travel in the brain cells and affect the outcome of stroke-induced neuronal death."


Dr. Zha said that currently this area of research is very poorly understood, and his team will use models to observe how the ASICs travel to different parts of the neuron and affect brain damage during a stroke.

The grant focuses on understanding the pH changes in stroke, but a pH change also occurs in other conditions such as seizures, Parkinson's disease, and traumatic brain injury.

"Several mitochondria and neurodegenerative diseases decrease brain pH," he said. "Understanding the basic mechanisms of how these channels behave will give us a better understanding of the makeup of these diseases."

Dr. Zha said that his research aims to ultimately decrease fatalities in patients with these types of diseases.

The USA College of Medicine has collaborated with other researchers to gather preliminary data needed to receive this grant. Dr. Zha said that he is grateful to his colleagues at Morehouse College of Medicine and the University of Missouri at Kansas City. He also invites graduate students and post-doctoral fellows who are interested in this research to participate in the four-year study.

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Next Week's DSS - Dr. Loren Wold

The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will be presented by Dr. Loren E. Wold, associate professor of pediatrics at Ohio State University and principal investigator in the Center for Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Research at The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital.



The lecture, titled "Environmental Triggers of Cardiovascular Disease," will take place Jan. 24, 2013, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium on USA's main campus.


Dr. Wold's research focuses on how cardiovascular function is affected by different disease states, including diabetes, obesity and hypertension.

Dr. Wold has a B.S. from Boston University, and a M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

He completed postdoctoral fellowships as a cardiology research fellow at The Heart Institute, Good Samaritan Hospital and Division of Cardiovascular Medicine at University of Southern California, and as a senior research associate in the pharmacology department at University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Dr. Wold is a member of various professional organizations including the American Physiological Society, American Heart Association, and American Diabetes Association. He has been recognized for numerous honors and awards including: Star Reviewer, American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology and the Exemplary Service Award for Good Samaritan Hospital.

For more information on Dr. Wold's research, [click here](#).

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