

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, March 21, 2013

High School Students Learn about Field of Neurology



Dr. Dean Naritoku, chair of neurology at USA, gives students at the Alabama School of Math and Science a tour of the neuroscience wing at the USA Medical Center.




Dr. Naritoku shows the students how to test reflexes with a reflex hammer.

Students at the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile recently visited the University of South Alabama Medical Center as part of Brain Awareness Week.

The national event, which takes place every year in March, focuses on increasing public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research.

While there, the high school students were given information about careers in neuroscience, as well as brief lectures on epilepsy and Parkinson's Disease.

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USA Mitchell Cancer Institute Hosts 2013 Oncology Outlook



The University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Institute recently hosted Oncology Outlook 2013 at the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa in Point Clear, Ala. This year, faculty speakers gave an update on lung cancer.

Pictured above (from left to right) are Dr. Robert Cerfolio, professor of surgery and chief of thoracic surgery at UAB; Dr. Kane Schaphorst, associate professor of medicine and pharmacology at USA; Dr. Anthony Martino, chair of neurosurgery at USA; Dr. John Chaney, director of the Emerald Coast Sleep Center and chair of the pulmonary/sleep department at White-Wilson Medical Center in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; Dr. Suzanne Russo, professor of radiation oncology services at the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute; and Dr. Daniel Cameron, associate professor of interdisciplinary clinical oncology at the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute.

To view the event brochure and complete list of faculty speakers, [click here](#).

Mark your calendar for next year's Oncology Outlook, which is scheduled for March 21-22, 2014.



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March 28th DSS to Feature Dr. Basil Rigas

The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will feature Dr. Basil Rigas, professor of medicine and professor of pharmacological sciences at Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, N.Y.




The lecture will take place March 28, 2013, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium on USA's main campus.

Dr. Rigas also serves as director of cancer prevention, vice president of business development, and dean for clinical affairs at Stony Brook University.

Dr. Rigas graduated from Athens University and did postgraduate work at Brown University, Brandeis University, and Yale University. He served on the faculty at Cornell University in the departments of medicine and molecular microbiology and on faculty at Rockefeller University and the Institute for Cancer Prevention.

During the last several years, Dr. Rigas has focused his efforts on the prevention of colon cancer using traditional NSAIDs, NO-donating NSAIDs and other pharmacological agents. He has also pioneered the application of infrared spectroscopy to biology with emphasis on cancer holding several relevant patents. A new area of work concerns the use of nanotechnology in the prevention of cancer.

To learn more about Dr. Rigas, [click here](#).

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USA College of Medicine to Host 5th Annual Gumbo Chili Showdown



The fifth annual Gumbo Chili Showdown will take place April 6, 2013, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. preceding the University of South Alabama Jaguars Spring Game at Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

This annual event benefits the Regan Robinson Young Scholarship Fund at the USA College of Medicine. The event will feature both gumbo and chili from competing teams representing area medical practices and local businesses.

Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased by [clicking here](#).


The Gumbo Chili Showdown was created in 2008 by USA medical students and continues to be a project organized by students at the USA College of Medicine.

The event supports a scholarship 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. The scholarship provides assistance to a rising senior medical student who embodies Regan's spirit and character.

Register your team now at <http://www.gumbochili.com/team-register.php> or sponsor the event at <http://www.gumbochili.com/sponsors.php>.

For more information, e-mail Griffin Collins at gumbochili@gmail.com.



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USA Family Medicine Focusing on Quality Improvement

In an effort to improve the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health care throughout the country, primary care centers are turning to a model of care that facilitates partnerships between individual patients, their personal physicians, and their family.

The goal of this model, referred to as a patient-centered medical home (PCMH), is to improve the patient experience and medical outcomes through a more holistic approach that emphasizes patient education, access, and patient-physician communication.

The University of South Alabama Department of Family Medicine is working to achieve a PCMH model of care by modifying their approach from physician-only care to one where physicians, nurses and clinic staff work as a team to take care of the whole patient.



Dr. Tangela Atkinson

"The goal of a PCMH model of care is to provide health care that is centered on the patient," said Dr. Tangela Atkinson, assistant professor of family medicine at USA. "This is important because it improves the effectiveness and efficiency of health care."

USA Family Medicine currently has three quality improvement groups – comprised of physicians, nurses and clerical staff – that meet three days a month to discuss ways of providing team-based care to their patients.

According to Renetta McMillan, clinical operations manager at USA Family Medicine, the department is also enhancing patient care by providing patients with information to become more engaged in their medical care.

"We have a patient portal that gives the patient a way to directly communicate with their provider between visits, and patients can request a referral or schedule an appointment online," McMillan said.

Information on treatment plans, preventative and follow-up care reminders, and access to medical records are also posted on the secure portal.

"This benefits patients by giving them more control of their care and more accessibility to their individual physician," said Dr. Atkinson. "Having a patient portal in place allows the patient to securely request medication refills and receive results of labs and radiologic studies from the comforts of home at a time convenient to them."

In addition to the patient portal, Dr. Atkinson said the department also provides electronic prescriptions and has implemented an electronic health record system that organizes the patients' charts.

Dr. Atkinson said the PCMH model of care improves the quality of care delivered in the office and allows care to take place outside of the office when the patient doesn't need a face-to-face clinic visit.

Another standard of a PCMH is to demonstrate a commitment to quality improvement by engaging in performance measurement, as well as measuring and responding to patient experiences.

Specifically, Dr. Atkinson said the department is focusing its efforts on improving diabetes care and asthma care, as well as reducing the use of tobacco products.

The department set a goal that 90 percent of all diabetic patients receive a hemoglobin A1c test – a blood test that gauges how well you are managing your diabetes – every three months. Initially, only 55 percent of patients met that goal.

"Interventions were put in place, which included patient reminder cards and a standing order that patients may obtain a hemoglobin A1c test without a concurrent office visit," Dr. Atkinson said.


"After two months, there was a 50 percent improvement in the number of diabetic patients who received the test."

Quality improvement can also be seen in asthma patients. "By putting standing order in place, which allows nurses to give all asthma patients an influenza vaccine without additional physician order, influenza vaccine rates in this population improved from 20 percent to 35 percent," she said.

Quality improvement efforts in the cessation of tobacco included first identifying patients in the clinic ages 13 and older who use tobacco products.

"By taking a team-based approach, the documentation of tobacco use and identification of those patients occurred 98 percent of the time, which exceeded our goal of 85 percent," Dr. Atkinson said. "Patients were then provided tobacco cessation counseling and resources."

Dr. Atkinson said this is the second year USA Family Medicine has been focusing on quality improvement efforts, and the department hopes to attain certification by the end of 2013.

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Register Now: 22nd Annual Obstetrics & Gynecology Conference

The University of South Alabama Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology will be hosting its 22nd annual conference April 11-12, 2013, at the Daphne Civic Center at 2603 Highway 98 in Daphne, Ala.

Guest speakers and topics include: "Decisions: Your Role in a Mother's Decision to Breastfeed" by Glenda Dickerson, women's services manager at Brookwood Medical Center in Birmingham, Ala.; "Care of PIH Patients" by Dr. Baha M. Sibai, professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at University of Texas Medical School in Houston, Texas; and "Vaginal Hysterectomy: A 19th Century Operation in the 21st Century" by Dr. James B. Unger, associate

professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Louisiana State University in Shreveport, La.

USA faculty speakers and topics include:

"Compassion Fatigue" by Casey Armistead, RN; "Opioid Dependency in Pregnancy" by Dr. Susan Baker; "Menopause" by Dr. Frankie Bodie; "Screening for Ovarian Cancer and Endometrial Cancer: Are We on the Cusp of Success?" by Dr. Michael Finan;

"Contraception Update" by Dr. John LaFleur;

"Pre-term Labor Including Fetal Fibronectin and Cervical Lengths" by Dr. David Lewis;

"Update on Neonatal Resuscitation" by Cathy McCurley, RN; "Endometriosis: How to Manage Pelvic Pain and Infertility" by Dr. Botros Rizk;

"Ovarian Carcinogenesis: Insight into an Evolving Model" by Dr. Jennifer Scalici;


"Care of Diabetic Patients" by Dr. Robert Stauffer; and "Evaluation and

Management of Women with Vaginal Malodor" by Dr. Stephen Varner.



CEU's will be available. To register, [click here](#). A late registration fee of \$35 will be applied after April 1, 2013.

The event brochure can be viewed [here](#). For any additional information call (251) 415-1491 or (251) 415-1571.

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