

# Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, April 25, 2013

## May 2nd DSS to Feature Dr. David Walker



The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine will feature Dr. David H. Walker, professor and chair of pathology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas.

The lecture, titled "Mechanisms of Immunity to Rickettsia and Implications for Vaccine Development," will take place May 2, 2013, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium on USA's main campus.

Dr. Walker also serves as director of the University of Texas Medical Branch Center for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Disease.

His research focuses on immune mechanisms against the bacteria rickettsiae and ehrlichiae and identification of the protein antigens that stimulate immunity.

Dr. Walker earned his bachelor of arts degree from Davidson College in Davidson, N.C., and his medical degree from Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

To learn more about Dr. Walker's research, [click here](#).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [8:24 AM](#) No comments:

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

## COM Class of 2013 to Host Skit Night



The University of South Alabama College of Medicine Class of 2013 will host a skit night on May 2, 2013, at 7 p.m. at the Temple Downtown in Mobile. The doors will open at 6 p.m., and the show starts at 6:30 p.m.

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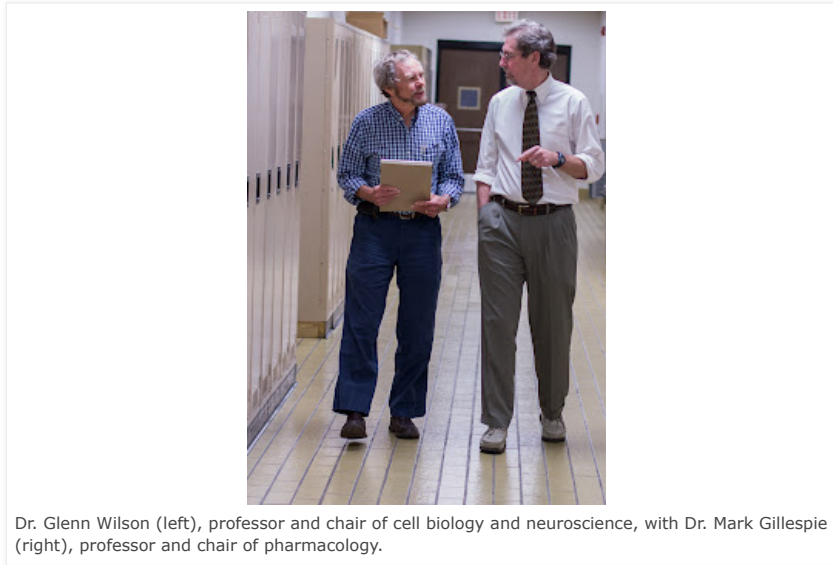
The skits pertain to the four years of medical school. All faculty, staff and students are invited to attend.

Tickets in advance are \$10 per person. You can also purchase tickets at the door for \$15 per person. For more information or to purchase tickets, e-mail [usacom2013social@gmail.com](mailto:usacom2013social@gmail.com).

To view a video clip shown at the College of Medicine's Class of 2011 Skit Night, [click here](#).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:58 AM](#) No comments: 

## Biotech Company Affiliated with USA College of Medicine Advances in Alabama Launchpad Competition



A biotech company affiliated with the University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently advanced in the Alabama Launchpad competition, along with six other start-ups.

The company, Exscien, led by Steve and Christine Cumbie, focuses its efforts on developing a new drug to prevent and reverse acute lung injury.

Dr. Mark Gillespie, professor and chair of pharmacology and a member of the Center for Lung Biology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, is one of the partners in the company. The USA College of Medicine is collaborating with Exscien in an effort to rapidly develop treatments.

After making it through the first round in the Alabama Launchpad competition, Exscien wrote an extensive business plan. On March 4, a judged pitch presentation event was held in Birmingham. From that, the competition's judges narrowed the finalists to seven.

According to Dr. Gillespie, most lungs available for transplant cannot be used partly because of concerns that they will perform poorly after introduction into the patient. As a result, of the approximately 14,000 people currently awaiting a lung transplant, only a small fraction actually receive the new organ. Dr. Gillespie indicated that basic research performed by USA investigators pointed to the prospect that the new drug, when given to donor lungs, could increase the number of lungs that can be safely transplanted by fixing them prior to the transplant procedure.

Multiple studies by Dr. Gillespie and his colleague Dr. Glenn Wilson, professor and chair of cell biology and neuroscience at USA, showed that damage to the DNA of mitochondria – the powerhouse of the cell – functions like a fuse, killing lung cells in various diseases.

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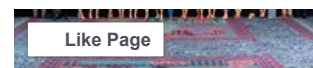
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Dr. Wilson and his team invented and patented a fusion protein several years ago that repairs mitochondrial damage and wards off cell death and disease.

The company would develop fusion proteins for use in lung transplants after they are procured from the donor. The protein is given before the transplant to improve the quality of the lungs for transplant and to block primary graft dysfunction, a problem in which the lung fails within about 48 hours of being transplanted.

Both Dr. Gillespie and Dr. Wilson emphasized the importance of USA's involvement in drug development research, as well as the importance of researchers commercializing their ideas.

"If products are not patented and commercialized, they will never make it to the marketplace," Dr. Wilson said. "We are using this competition as a way to promote our company's efforts to bring these fusion proteins to the marketplace so that they can help people."


According to Dr. Gillespie, partnerships between universities and the private sector aren't new, but they are fairly new for the state of Alabama and at USA. "In the current financial environment, where there is less and less money available to support basic research, it becomes increasingly important for researchers to commercialize their ideas," Dr. Gillespie added. "We think this drug may really improve outcomes of lung transplant and may have applications in a wide range of other human disorders."

The purpose of the Alabama Launchpad program is to promote and reward high-growth, innovative ventures that have the potential to grow and thrive in Alabama. The program is for new, independent ventures in the pre-seed, seed, startup or early-growth stages, or for the expansion of an existing business into a new high-growth market.

The Alabama Launchpad competition continues through May, when four or five winners are expected to split \$100,000 in start-up capital. All of the seven start-ups that advanced will get an assessment of their business model by a third-party firm. "The main motivation behind participating in this competition is getting expert business advice," Dr. Gillespie said.

To learn more about the competition, visit <http://www.alabamalaunchpad.com/>.

To read an article about the competition in the Press-Register, [click here](#).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [9:23 AM](#) No comments: 

**Tuesday, April 23, 2013**

## USA Autism Interest Group to Host Autism Grand Rounds




The University of South Alabama's Autism Interest Group is hosting Autism Grand Rounds on May 3, 2013, from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the College of Education, Room 3212, at University Commons.

As part of this year's professional conference, Dr. Heather Hall, associate professor of maternal-child health nursing at the USA College of Nursing, will present "Maladaptive Behaviors of Children with Autism: Parent Support, Stress, and Coping."

The event is open to USA faculty, staff, and students. The meetings are designed to provide a forum for discussion of research and service provision within the University community related to autism spectrum disorders and developmental disabilities.

The conference does not provide CEUs, but a certificate of attendance will be available.

For additional information, contact Amy Mitchell at [abmitchell@usouthal.edu](mailto:abmitchell@usouthal.edu).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [11:04 AM](#) No comments: 

**Monday, April 22, 2013**

## Dr. Marc E. Mitchell to Present Frazer/Leigh Memorial Lecture

Dr. Marc E. Mitchell, James D. Hardy professor and chair of the surgery department at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, will present two CME accredited lectures in May.



Both talks are open to all medical professionals and are made possible through the Dr. Emmett B. Frazer and Dr. Milton M. Leigh Endowments at the University of South Alabama department of surgery.

Dr. Mitchell will present the first lecture, "Acute Arterial Thromboembolic Disease," on May 2, 2013. There will be a reception starting at 6:30 p.m., followed by the lecture at 7:30 p.m. at the USA Faculty Club on USA's main campus.


His second lecture, titled "Surgical Education," will take place May 3, 2013, at 7 a.m. at the conference room located on the second floor of the USA Medical Center at 2451 Fillingim St.

Dr. Mitchell earned his medical degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine. His research interests include pathogenesis of atherosclerosis, epidemiology of vascular disease and endovascular surgery.

Dr. Mitchell is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a distinguished fellow of the Society for Vascular Surgery, and a member of numerous surgical societies. He has published numerous original articles, editorials and book chapters.

This annual memorial lecture, funded by community surgeons and the USA Department of Surgery, is given to honor the legacy of Dr. Emmett B. Frazer and Dr. Milton M. Leigh as leaders in clinical service and graduate surgical education in the Mobile community.

For more information on both lectures, contact the surgery department at (251) 471-7993.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [8:21 AM](#) No comments: 

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