

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, February 17, 2017

USA Gold Humanism Honor Society Members Participate in Solidarity Week



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University of South Alabama fourth-year medical student and GHHS member Emily Spurlin hangs a "Tell Me More" poster in a patient's room at USA Children's and Women's Hospital.

The Gold Humanism in Medicine Honor Society's (GHHS) Solidarity Week for compassionate patient care was held Feb. 13-17, 2017. The University of South Alabama College of Medicine chapter of GHHS participated in several activities to remind students and employees of the importance of compassion in medicine.

"As health care providers, having compassion for our patients' situations is paramount to providing good patient care and drives our mission to alleviate suffering," said Emily Spurlin, a fourth-year medical student and GHHS member at the USA College of Medicine. "It can be easy to focus on the medical details of a patient's illness, but it does not matter if you cannot connect with the patient and establish a plan for diagnosis and treatments, taking into account a patient's experiences and values."

Solidarity Week is focused on encouraging medical schools and patient care facilities around the country to show the importance of kindness to patients. On Tuesday, Feb. 14, GHHS members participated in the "Tell Me More" campaign. After obtaining consent, medical students asked patients to tell them unique information about themselves.

After patients answered questions about their strengths, how friends would describe them, and what is meaningful to them, the students crafted a poster to present to the patients. The posters were placed above their bed to showcase information like their favorite movies, nicknames or hobbies.

Jelaina Scott, a fourth-year medical student, discussed the many positive aspects of Solidarity Week and its impact on students, patients and medical staff.

"Patients understand that we care about who they are, not just the disease they have," Scott said. "Health care providers benefit because Solidarity Week gives them a chance to learn more about their patients and helps them better connect, while also providing an opportunity for staff to feel appreciated for everything they do for the patients and the hospital."

"We have the opportunity to show patients that we value and appreciate the attributes that make them unique as individuals," added fourth-year medical student Brian McGrath.

McGrath visited with Kimberly Crowell, who lit up when she saw doctors walk in her room with her poster. "This made my day," Crowell said.

Corwin McGee, a fourth-year medical student and president of GHHS at USA, said that Solidarity Week renews his interest in getting to know patients. "Solidarity Week puts things into perspective by making me think about how I would want members of my family to be treated if they were under our care," he said.

This year, rising senior members were able to participate in Solidarity Week for the first time. "We decided to let third-year students participate in Solidarity Week so they would have an idea of the work that goes into such an important

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yearly event," said Karen Braswell, USA GHHS chapter advisor and coordinator of clinical education at the USA College of Medicine.

Ashton Todd, a third-year medical student, learned more about the value of spending time with young patients during Solidarity Week. "Solidarity Week has shown me that it only takes little gestures to show people who you work with every day that they are appreciated," she said.

Todd was able to spend time with 8-year-old patient Keaziah Frazier at USA Children's and Women's Hospital during the Tell Me More campaign, which she said brought them closer as patient and healthcare provider. "I was able to get to know her by asking questions like her favorite color and favorite sport," Todd said. "I was so overjoyed to see her enthusiasm and appreciation."

Spurlin, who also participated in the Tell Me More campaign at USA Children's and Women's Hospital, said the patients had the "most remarkable attitudes." "To see them smile as we talked about their posters was amazing."

GHHS students are committed to practicing compassion in health care far beyond Solidarity Week. "After this week, I will take with me a renewed enthusiasm for engaging my patients on a deeper level in order to make their care as centered on their needs as possible," McGrath said.

Tuesday, GHHS members distributed candy, crackers and granola bars at nursing stations to show their appreciation to staff members. "The hospital could not run without the hard work of the entire hospital staff," McGee said.


Later that week, GHHS members distributed Krispy Kreme doughnuts to residents and handed out thank-you cards to healthcare workers who have gone the extra mile.

Warren Greene, assistant administrator of USA Health, thanked students for participating in "such a fantastic project." "Remember to continue to show compassion in health care in your future endeavors," he said. "This project is greatly appreciated and truly makes a difference."

The national Gold Humanism Honor Society office established National Solidarity Day for Compassionate Care in 2011 to highlight the nation-wide movement promoting provider-patient relationships based on caring, personalization and mutual respect. Momentum gathered particularly after the Senate passed a resolution in 2013 and 2014 to officially recognize Solidarity Day on the national calendar, and it is now typically celebrated on or around Valentine's Day.

[Click here](#) to view more photos from Solidarity Week at USA.

To learn more about Solidarity Week, [click here](#). Share your own posts and photos using the hashtag #SolidarityWeek.

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Thursday, February 16, 2017

USA Gold Humanism Honor Society Members Implement "Three Good Things" to Help Medical Students Cope with Burnout

Members of the Gold Humanism in Medicine Honor Society (GHHS) at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently implemented the "Three Good Things" stress management technique to decrease burnout, depression and apathy among third-year medical students.

Several GHHS members from the Class of 2017 bought notebooks for third-year medical students to each record "three good things" that happened to them that day. According to Corwin McGee, a fourth-year medical student and GHHS president at the USA College of Medicine, the exercise serves as an avenue for students to reflect, recognize and document the positive aspects of their day.



Third-year medical student Alexandria Broadnax writes "three good things" in her notebook. The exercise serves as an avenue for students to reflect, recognize and document the positive aspects of their day.

"Medical students that are going through burnout can experience poor performance in school and problems in their personal life," McGee said. "It is important to address burnout early on because studies have shown that burnout starts in medical school and can persist into their residency training."

According to McGee, although the effects of burnout can impact all medical students, GHHS members implemented this technique with third-year students because it is the first year students have daily interactions with patients.

"The third year of medical school can be a difficult adjustment," said Jacob Sexton, another fourth-year medical student and GHHS member at the USA College of Medicine. "In addition to didactic classes, they are now working with patients and get to witness both the high and low points of medicine. The three good things exercise helps push away any negativity that is associated with some aspects of medical school, while reminding oneself about the amazing things that we are privileged to do every day."

Third-year medical student Alexandria Broadnax said the transition from learning about diseases in textbooks to learning about diseases from patient encounters can be both exciting and overwhelming.

"During the first two years of medical school we generally have a set lecture schedule and dedicated study time," she said. "The third year can be difficult because it is vastly self-directed and requires independent learning and managing time to study after clinical duties."

Broadnax said it is a great idea for medical students to reflect and be reminded of at least three good things that took place each day. "I am a believer that everything happens for a reason, and it is important to try to find the good in each situation in order to grow and become a better you," she said.


Although she has not experienced burnout herself, Broadnax said it is a common issue that many medical students experience. "I believe burnout in medical school is more prevalent than we would like to imagine," she said. "Thankfully, I have a great support system that includes my close family, friends and church family who I can rely on for both emotional and spiritual support."

In addition to documenting three good things each night, McGee, Sexton and Broadnax agree that maintaining a life outside of medical school is vital. "The best thing medical students can do to avoid burnout is to have something to turn to when school and life gets stressful," McGee said. "Whether that is your family, friends or hobbies, you have to have something outside the realm of medicine."

The GHHS members of the Class of 2017 were inspired to address burnout in medical school by Dr. Terri Babineau, former assistant dean of student affairs and associate professor of family medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, Va. Recently, Dr. Babineau presented "Burnout in Healthcare and Mindfulness Tools" to first- and second-year medical students and "Narrative

Medicine in Response to Burnout” at a joint Grand Rounds lecture for the departments of obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics at USA.

To learn more about “Three Good Things,” [click here](#).

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Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Two USA Medical Students Match in Competitive Residency Program



University of South Alabama fourth-year medical students Sean Carter and Caroline Miller recently found out they matched in ophthalmology. The majority of medical students go through the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) to find out where they will be doing their residency training following graduation, but students who wish to match in ophthalmology participate in a specialty match program that takes place months before Match Day on March 17.

Two medical students at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently found out they matched in ophthalmology.

The majority of medical students go through the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) to find out where they will be doing their residency training following graduation, but students who wish to match in ophthalmology participate in a specialty match program that takes place months before Match Day on March 17.

According to Dr. Susan LeDoux, associate dean of medical education and student affairs at USA, ophthalmology is an extremely competitive subspecialty. “We are very proud of the students who matched in ophthalmology,” she said. “Their success speaks to the quality of students who choose to come to our medical school at USA and to the quality of their training at the USA College of Medicine.”

Fourth-year medical student Sean Carter matched in ophthalmology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Miss.

Carter did an away rotation at the University of Mississippi Medical Center last year and was excited to have matched at a program that he was already comfortable with. “Having already developed great relationships with the residents and faculty and knowing how great the clinical and surgical training are at UMMC made me all the more happy to have matched there.”

Originally from Daphne, Ala., Carter earned his undergraduate degree in biomedical sciences from Auburn University. His love for anatomy and physiology developed at Auburn, and the shadowing and volunteering experiences he was given during that time allowed him to see the potential impact he could have on the lives of others. “Going into medicine was an opportunity that I couldn’t pass up,” he said.

During medical school, Carter shadowed a local retina specialist. It was his first exposure to the field of ophthalmology, and he was “hooked.”

“Seeing how happy and grateful the patients were in the clinic and the

unbelievable complexity and precision of the microsurgical procedures blew me away," he said. "I was sold!"

Caroline Miller, another fourth-year medical student at USA, matched into the University of Iowa ophthalmology program – her first choice. "I was shocked that I matched at my first choice, and absolutely elated that I did so," Miller said. "I wanted to go to Iowa because I felt that it was a place that I could really grow as a physician."

Miller believes ophthalmology is the most exciting field in medicine right now. "Treatment options are advancing quickly and patient outcomes are improving as a result," she said. "It's also a very hands-on field with long-term patient-physician relationships. For those that love surgery but also want a clinic-based practice, it's really a perfect fit."

Miller grew up in Mobile, Ala., and graduated from Murphy High School in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. She went on to earn a bachelor of science degree in biology from Emory University. Miller and her family are no strangers to the medical field or the USA College of Medicine.


Her oldest brother, Dr. T. Cooper Wilson, is a USA College of Medicine alum and currently a chief resident in orthopaedic surgery at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Her younger brother, Caleb Wilson, is a third-year medical student at USA.

Both Carter and Miller agree that their medical education at USA will help guide them through their residencies. "I think the clinical training we get here is unbeatable, and the mentorship I've had has been incredible," Miller said.

"I know the skills I've learned here will carry over into residency," Carter said. "I am proud of the training that I have received over the past few years at USA, and I feel prepared to be very successful in the years to come."

Carter and Miller will start their ophthalmology residencies in July.

The remainder of the USA College of Medicine Class of 2017 will find out where they matched on Match Day, March 17, 2017. The event will take place at the Mobile Convention Center in Mobile, Ala.

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Summer Research Proposal Deadline Approaching



The deadline to submit proposals for the 2017 Medical Student Summer Research Program is March 1, 2017.


The University of South Alabama College of Medicine's Summer Research

Program is a 9-week program (May 31 through July 28, 2017) that pairs medical students with faculty mentors. The program is open to entering medical students and rising second-year medical students in the USA College of Medicine.

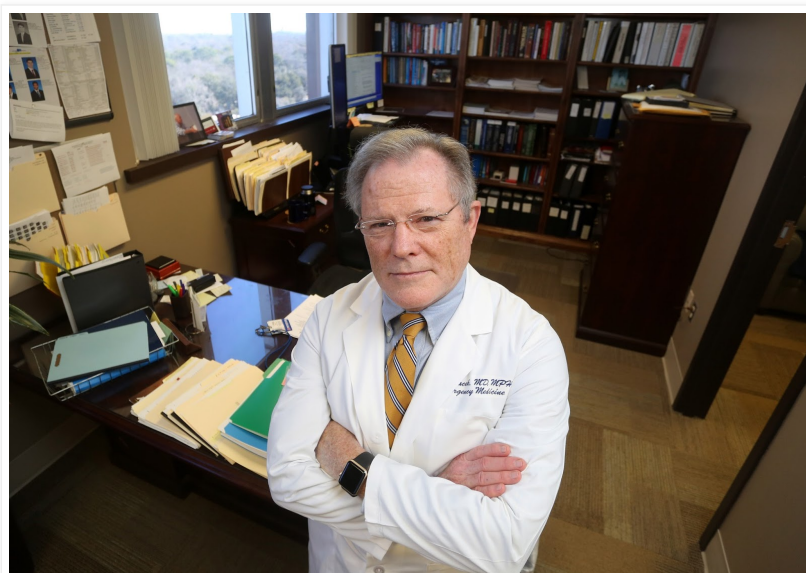
Through this program, students develop an appreciation of how research contributes to the knowledge and the practice of medicine. The summer experience includes hands-on research related to basic science and/or clinical medicine; a seminar program that focuses on various scientific and clinical topics; and student presentations at Research Day.

The Medical Student Research Proposal form and the Research Compliance Checklist for the Summer Research Program can be found [here](#). Please submit these forms to Marcina Lang, the program coordinator, at marcinalang@southalabama.edu. Research proposal guidelines and example proposals are available online to assist you with proposal preparation. Please follow the format provided.

For more information, call (251) 460-6041.

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Dr. Panacek Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Dr. Edward Panacek, chair and professor of emergency medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) for his many years of service as a prolific educator, researcher and leader in emergency medicine.

Dr. Panacek has been very actively involved with ACEP since joining in 1986. Over the years, he has chaired several committees, task forces and the Research Section of the organization.

His work with ACEP led to a course he created called the Emergency Medicine Basic Research Skills (EMBRs) course taught at ACEP Headquarters in Dallas, Texas. He has been the course director since its inception 20 years ago. EMBRS typically enrolls 30 students per year, teaching early career physicians the research skills needed to succeed in academic medicine. "Educating the next generation of academicians to replace us, while facilitating their scholarly activities that move the field forward is very fulfilling for me," Dr. Panacek said.

Dr. Panacek has served as chair of emergency medicine at USA for a year and a half, dedicating himself to the advancement of the department and the College of Medicine. "A more academic department of emergency medicine is a positive move in the right direction for both the health system and the university," he said.


Dr. Panacek is grateful for the recognition he received. "When you enter medical practice or academics, you don't go into it to win awards. However, when your accomplishments are recognized by respected colleagues and also reflect positively on the work we do at USA, it is a great feeling."

Dr. Panacek said that the secret to a long career in emergency medicine is going into it for the right reasons. "Individuals who end up in emergency medicine for the wrong reasons can get frustrated pretty quickly," he said. "Pace yourself and find other things to do. Have some balance in your life, including in academics. It's the variety of activities in academic teaching programs - performing research, educating and mentoring bright, young physicians that will follow in our footsteps - that make this job so great."

The award was given to Dr. Panacek at the annual ACEP conference in Oct. 2016 in Las Vegas, Nev.

Learn more about ACEP [here](#).

For more information on the EMBRS course that Dr. Panacek directs, [click here](#).

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