

# Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, January 5, 2018

## USA Health Represented in 40 Under 40



Three employees at USA Health were included in the 2017 class of the Mobile Bay 40 Under 40. Through a nomination process, the annual Mobile Bay 40 Under 40 awards identify 40 of the area's young professionals who will benefit the community for years to come with their leadership, professional excellence and community service.

Dr. Natalie Fox, pediatric nurse practitioner and director of nursing at USA Physicians Group, feels honored to have been included in the list. "Receiving this recognition encourages me to continue to grow as a leader by serving others," she said. "I am grateful for all of the wonderful mentors I have had at USA that have helped me grow over the years."

Dr. Fox earned both her bachelor of science in nursing and master of science in nursing from USA. She also completed her doctorate of nursing practice degree at USA last year.

"Through leadership and service, it is my personal mission that at the end of each day I am able to say that I have helped people lead longer, better lives," Dr. Fox said.

Dr. Weisi Yan, assistant professor of interdisciplinary clinical oncology and a radiation oncologist with USA Mitchell Cancer Institute, said the award makes him motivated to keep seeking excellence as a physician and resident of Mobile. "I am very grateful to be a part of USA and feel honored to have the University's trust in me to represent them in the community," he said.

"The greatest reward to a physician is that he makes a difference to the institution he belongs to," Dr. Yan said.

USA College of Medicine alum Dr. Charles Hartin, associate professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine and a pediatric surgeon with USA Physicians Group, is excited to use the publicity from his honor to share information with the community about the surgical program at USA Children's and Women's Hospital.

"Many Mobilians are surprised to learn that USA Children's & Women's Hospital is the only location in the southern half of Alabama where a child requiring surgery is cared for by a surgeon and an anesthesiologist both trained and board-certified for expertise with children," Dr. Hartin said. "This makes a huge difference in outcomes and the patient experience."

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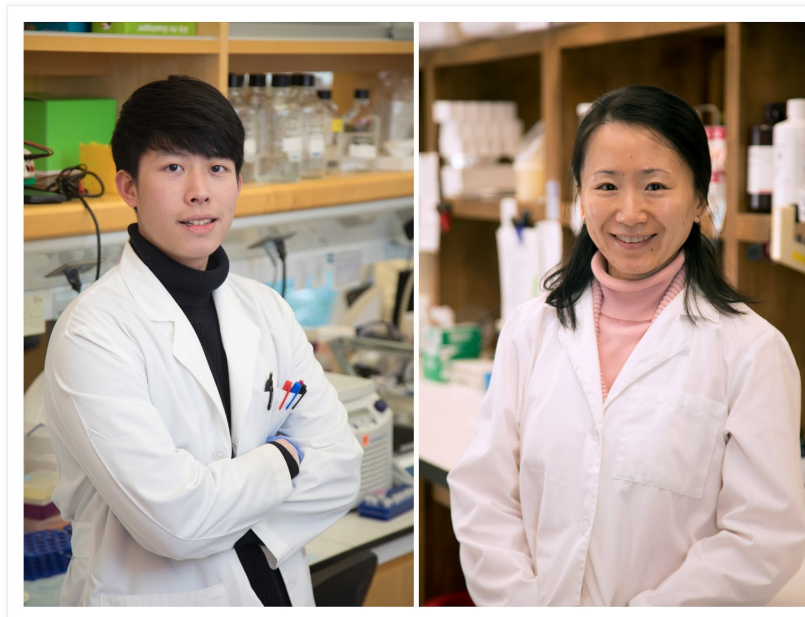
Another USA College of alum was named to the 2017 Mobile Bay 40 Under 40 Class. Dr. Grant Zarzour, an orthopaedic surgeon in private practice in Mobile, Ala., was among those honored this year. He graduated from the USA College of Medicine in 2007 and completed his residency training in orthopaedic surgery at USA.

To learn more about each young leader and view the entire 2017 Class of 40 Under 40, [click here](#).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [4:35 PM](#) No comments: 

**Thursday, January 4, 2018**

## 11th Annual COM Research Forum Winners Announced



The University of South Alabama College of Medicine hosted its 11th annual Research Forum on Nov. 17, 2017. First place winners Alexander Richard and Dr. Ningyong Xu were presented travel awards for their extensive research.

"Although the forum was slightly smaller than previous years, I think this year was the most exciting yet," said Dr. Donna Cioffi, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the USA College of Medicine. The forum consisted of two sessions - the morning session was comprised of nine oral presentations, and the afternoon session included 42 poster presentations.

Alexander Richard, a basic medical science graduate student, won a \$1,000 travel award for best overall graduate student presentation. His research was performed in oncologic sciences in the lab of Dr. Erin Ahn, associate professor of oncologic sciences at USA Mitchell Cancer Institute. He was also assisted by Dr. Gary Piazza, leader of Cancer Chemoprevention and Experimental Therapeutics Programs at USA Mitchell Cancer Institute and Dr. Hamdy Abdel-Rahman, professor of medicinal chemistry at Assuit University in Assuit, Egypt.

According to Richard, leukemic cells have the ability to remain in their immature, undifferentiated form and proliferate uncontrollably due to their atypical gene expression pattern. His project involves the synthesis of a novel drug that is designed to increase cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP), a signaling molecule that regulates cell procreation and differentiation. The results that Richard and his team presented show that the drug is more effective in causing cell death and differentiation of leukemic cells compared to other related, currently existing drugs.

Richard said his research has the potential to introduce a novel drug that is effective in treating different subtypes of acute myeloid leukemia and provide a

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deeper understanding of molecular mechanisms that are important in leukemia progression.

"Although the initial results seem exciting, it is critical for us to demonstrate the drug's specific mechanism of action in leukemic cells," Richard said.

Richard believes it is important for graduate students to be involved in the Research Forum because the attendees often provide unexpected questions and feedback from a different perspective.

"The Research Forum trains us to present our work to people from other research fields in a professional yet relatable way," Richard said.


The post-doctorate award was presented to Dr. Ningyong Xu.

Dr. Xu is currently studying whether reducing the coordination of intercellular contractile forces could be a potential therapeutic target to treat or prevent interendothelial gap formation and lung edema.

Dr. Xu said the Research Forum gave her the opportunity to hear from other researcher's work, as well as to become more thorough in her own. "I further understood my data by interacting with the audience and answering questions," she said. "It made me identify a problem previously that had not been thought."

"By listening to others' oral presentations and reading the abstract booklet, I got the chance to know others' on-going projects, which will benefit my knowledge background," she said.

To learn more about participating in the annual College of Medicine Research Forum, contact Dr. Cioffi at [dlcioffi@southalabama.edu](mailto:dlcioffi@southalabama.edu).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [8:53 AM](#) No comments: 

**Wednesday, January 3, 2018**

## January Med School Café - Five Healthy Ways to Start Off the New Year



The January Med School Café lecture will feature Dr. James E. McKinley, assistant professor of family medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and a family medicine physician with USA Physicians Group.

His lecture, titled "Five Healthy Ways to Start Off the New Year," will be held on Jan. 12, 2018, at the USA Strada Patient Care Center Conference Room on the first floor. Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m., and the presentation begins at noon.

Dr. McKinley will lecture on healthy eating and exercising. He will also discuss the importance of stress reduction and health maintenance.

Dr. McKinley earned his bachelor of science degree in chemistry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Huntsville, Ala. He earned his master of science degree in biological science at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Huntsville and his medical degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Birmingham, Ala. He completed his master's of business administration in May from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Dr. McKinley is a member of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians.

The Med School Café lecture and lunch are provided free of charge, but reservations are required. For more information or to make reservations, please call Kim Partridge at (251) 460-7770.

Med School Café is a free community lecture series sponsored by the USA Physicians Group. Each month, faculty from the USA College of Medicine share their expertise on a specific medical condition, providing insight on the latest treatment available.

The USA Strada Patient Care Center is located at 1601 Center St. in Mobile.

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## USA Gastroenterology Receives \$100,000 Donation



Dr. Mark Cleveland, vice president of new product development at Braintree Laboratories Inc. poses for a photo with Dr. Jack Di Palma (far left), program director of the division of gastroenterology and professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine; Margaret Sullivan (second from right), vice president of development and alumni relations at USA; and Racheal Banks, director of health sciences development and alumni relations at USA. Braintree Laboratories Inc. made a donation to the USA College of Medicine in November.

The USA Division of Gastroenterology recently received a \$100,000 donation from Braintree Laboratories, Inc., a privately held pharmaceutical company specializing in gastrointestinal products. The donation was presented to Dr. Jack Di Palma, professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine.

Dr. Mark Cleveland, vice president of new product development at Braintree Laboratories, Inc., said the partnership between Braintree Laboratories and the USA College of Medicine has been very successful. "We have been working with Dr. Di Palma since he was in the Air Force, and when he joined USA we followed him there," he said. "Since then, USA has been involved in many key studies for our products."



"Because of our close collaborative relationships, Braintree graciously made a capital campaign donation that will be used by the division of gastroenterology to support research and teaching activities," he said.

Dr. Di Palma said he became involved with Braintree Laboratories in 1982 while researching a new product the company was developing. "This product became GoLYTLEY, which is used for colon cleansing for diagnostic and surgical procedures," he said. "We have since collaborated in several clinical studies here at USA leading to the development of products such as NuLYTELY, HalfLYTLEY, MiraLax and SuPREP bowel prep kit."

According to Dr. Cleveland, the cost for conducting pharmaceutical studies is steadily rising, making it difficult for smaller pharmaceutical companies to operate. "Partnering with academic medical institutions is critical for small companies," he said. "We have found that working with academic institutions such as USA is very valuable."

Dr. Cleveland said Braintree also values the partnership with USA because of its diverse patient population. "USA Health has a large patient base that can be drawn upon, which is an important factor the FDA looks for," he said. "USA also does a fantastic job generating interest and recruiting patients to participate in studies."

Braintree Laboratories is a privately held pharmaceutical company that was founded in 1982 in Braintree, Mass. They currently have four gastrointestinal lavages available in the United States Market. [Click here](#) to learn more.

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## USA Welcomes Brooke A. Jackson, PA-C




Brooke Jackson, PA-C, recently joined USA Physicians Group as a certified physician assistant in the department of neurosurgery.

Prior to joining USA, Jackson served as a combat medic for the United States Army and has recently been selected to commission as a 1st Lieutenant Physician Assistant in the United States Army Reserves. She earned her bachelor of science degree from Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn., and her master's of health science in physician assistant studies at USA.

She is actively involved in the community with Junior League of Mobile and volunteers internationally for medical missions trips.

To make an appointment with Jackson, call (251) 665-8290.

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