

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, March 1, 2019

USA Health Physicians give young patient second chance with life-changing surgery



Kim Renihan holds her son, Liam, 3, who recently had surgery for epilepsy.

Kim and Matt Renihan had nearly lost hope for their 3-year-old son, Liam, who was diagnosed with epilepsy at 15 months old.

Liam was experiencing up to 100 seizures a day, causing his head and upper body to fall to the floor. He had speech and other developmental delays and could not maintain eye contact. He had been on countless anti-seizure medications - up to five a day - and had a vagus nerve stimulator implanted in his chest. After almost a full year of being seizure-free, the seizures came back.

The Renihans took Liam to three neurologists, who all said he was not a candidate for epilepsy surgery. Then, his mother heard that Dr. Juan Ochoa, a neurologist with USA Physicians Group and director of the SouthCEP Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, was accepting pediatric patients. Dr. Ochoa reviewed Liam's files and saw something that none of the other neurologists saw in his EEG and MRI - Liam was, in fact, a candidate for surgery.

Dr. Ochoa and Dr. George Rusyniak, a neurosurgeon with USA Health, worked collaboratively to map Liam's brain and define a focal point where the seizures were occurring. In mid-January, Liam underwent surgery to remove the parts of



Matt Renihan swings his son, Liam, in their front yard.

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lalyle@health.southalabama.edu

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the brain with seizure activity.

The results have been remarkable. Just five days after surgery, the boy who once struggled to maintain eye contact was throwing a ball back and forth with Dr. Ochoa. He started babbling and showing affection again for the first time in nearly two years. His mother said he now loves to give kisses and high fives. Liam will continue speech therapy and will return to preschool soon.

FOX10 News recently interviewed the Renihan family, as well as Dr. Ochoa and Dr. Rusyniak. [Watch the story here.](#)



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Mark your calendar: Lunch and Learn sessions

The Office of Faculty Affairs will be hosting the following "Lunch and Learn" sessions for faculty:

- March 12, noon to 1 p.m.: "Writing Abstracts and Manuscripts"
- May 8, noon to 1 p.m.: "Implicit Bias and How It Impacts Our Health Care Encounters"

All sessions will be held in the USA Children's & Women's Boardroom. Lunch will be served. Email Nicole Schultz at nschultz@southalabama.edu to sign-up for the sessions.

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In good hands: Dr. Michael Chang ensures quality care for trauma patients across the nation



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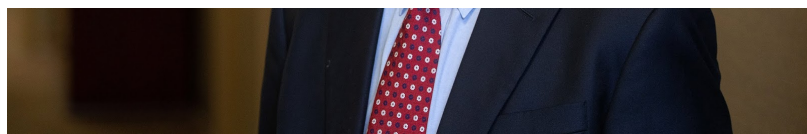
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Dr. Chang serves as chairman of the Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) at the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, and is a recognized national expert in quality assessment and performance improvement.



The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and improve the quality of care for all surgical patients. The ACS is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery.

This fall, Dr. Chang will lead a national meeting of the Trauma Quality Improvement Program in Dallas where more than 1,800 health care providers from across the United States will gather for continuing education on treating patients with traumatic injuries.


Fellowship-trained in critical care and trauma surgery, Dr. Chang's national leadership role with the Trauma Quality Improvement Program also means he is responsible for visiting and assessing trauma centers across the nation. "I make sure patients get the highest quality care possible," he said. "That includes identifying best practices for the care of injured patients and sharing the processes to make that possible."

Back in Mobile, Dr. Chang works with division leaders across USA Health's 3,900-employee system that includes USA Health University Hospital, USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital, USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute and USA Health Physicians Group to ensure quality, safety and efficiency of care to all patients.

In September 2018, Chang was named chief medical officer for USA Health, associate vice president for medical affairs and professor of surgery at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. Previously, he served as chief medical officer for Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and chief quality officer for the Wake Forest Baptist Health System in Winston-Salem, N.C. He also served as a professor of surgery at the Wake Forest School of Medicine.

About USA Health

Beginning with the founding of the USA College of Medicine in 1973, USA Health stands as the only academic medical center along the upper Gulf Coast. It provides excellent health care to the region's diverse population at USA University Hospital and the renowned USA Children's & Women's Hospital, one of only five freestanding hospitals in the country dedicated to the health care of children and women. Continuous research and technological advancements keep USA Mitchell Cancer Institute at the forefront of cancer treatment and outcomes. The health system employs 3,900 clinical and nonclinical staff members, including some 190 academic physicians who serve dual roles treating patients and teaching the next generation of medical doctors.

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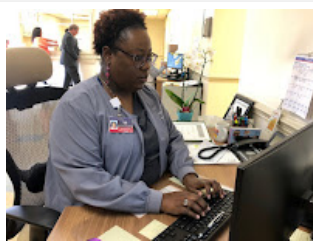
Jasmine Horn named February Employee of the Month

Jasmine Horn, a customer service leader in the call center for the department of surgery, received the USA Physicians Group Employee of the Month Award for February.

Horn has worked for USA Health for 16 years and was recently promoted to her current position after serving as a billing/insurance clerk.




Colleagues in the department of surgery congratulated Jasmine Horn, center, on her Employee of the Month Award.



Anne Norton, director of operations for surgery, nominated Horn for the award and presented her with the certificate and flowers. "Jasmine is a definite leader in providing excellent customer service," Norton said. "You can always hear a smile in Jasmine's voice over the phone, and she is always smiling when greeting people in person. It is a pleasure working with her."

A new patient left the following feedback of Horn: "Jasmine Horn answered the phone and was absolutely, positively the most helpful and pleasant person to speak with. I can't say enough about how kind she was and how patient she was with all of my questions."

The USA Physicians Group Employee of the Month Award recognizes employees who exhibit exceptional customer service, compassionate patient care, teamwork, and a willingness to go above and beyond their professional duties. To nominate an employee, fill out the [USA Physicians Group Employee of the Month Nomination Form](#).

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [8:57 AM](#) No comments: 

Thursday, February 28, 2019


Mark your calendar: USA Health Night March 2

USA Health has partnered with USA Athletics for "USA Health Night" at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 2, at the Mitchell Center.

At the men's basketball game, there will be special recognition of the incredible work we accomplish together at USA Health. USA Health faculty and staff will receive one complimentary ticket and a second specially priced ticket for \$3.



To reserve and print your tickets, visit jaguarathleticfund.com/USAHealth.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [2:11 PM](#) No comments: 

LCME continues full accreditation of COM Medical Education Program



The University of South Alabama College of Medicine recently achieved the highest level of accreditation available by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). The accreditation – which is valid for eight years – signifies that the USA College of Medicine met all national standards for structure, function and performance.

"The University of South Alabama through its College of Medicine is committed to student success and excellence in graduate student education," said Dr. John V. Marymont, vice president for medical affairs and dean of the USA College of Medicine. "I would like to congratulate the medical school faculty on LCME's affirmation of their significant contributions to our medical education program, as well as recognize our faculty's deep commitment to providing our students with an outstanding learning environment."




According to Dr. Marymont, through its educational mission, the USA College of Medicine has a tremendous positive impact on the health and well-being of our state and the upper Gulf Coast region. "In addition to the unique care our academic health center provides, more than 40 percent of our graduates choose to practice in Alabama providing care to our citizens," he said.

"USA medical students perform at the highest level on national exams designed to assess student knowledge and competency," said Dr. Susan LeDoux, who is associate dean for medical education and student affairs at the USA College of Medicine. "Recently, the USA College of Medicine class of 2018 scored in the top quartile of medical schools across the nation on Step 2-CK."

Dr. LeDoux credits success at the USA College of Medicine to preserving tradition while incorporating new approaches to teaching. "Since our founding, we have worked to foster a supportive and nurturing environment for our students," she said. "Our faculty have embraced our new integrative curriculum structure while maintaining an atmosphere supporting student success."

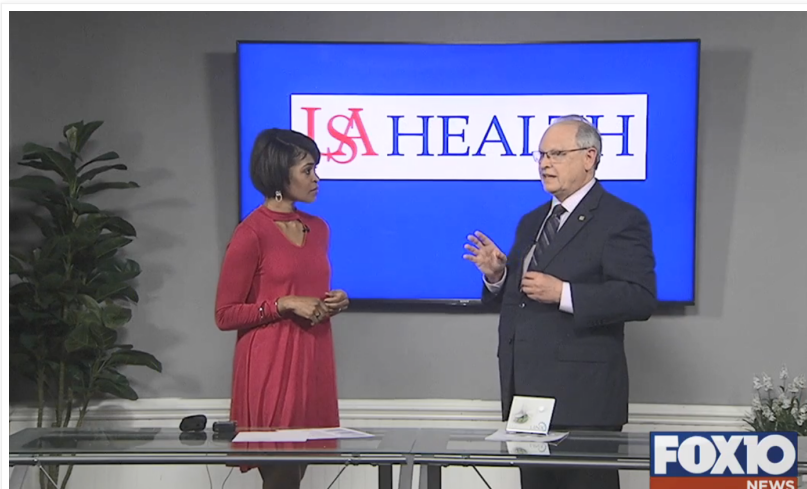
"The demonstration of quality education in our medical school is affirmed through this accreditation and is part of the rich fabric that makes the USA College of Medicine so special and vital to our region," said USA President Dr. Tony Waldrop.

LCME is the nationally recognized accrediting authority for medical education programs leading to the MD degree.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 2:02 PM No comments: 

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

Clinical trial finds LINX procedure most effective treatment for GERD



Dr. William Richards speaks with Lenise Ligon at FOX 10 News about the LINX procedure.

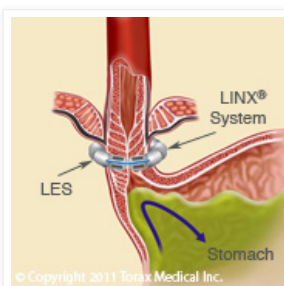
USA Health participated in a Caliber clinical trial to determine the effectiveness of the LINX Reflux Management System for the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Results of the study were recently published in *Gastrointestinal Endoscopy*, the peer-reviewed journal of the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

GERD, commonly referred to as acid reflux or heartburn, is a disease that is caused by a weak lower esophageal sphincter. This weak muscle allows stomach acid and bile to flow back into the esophagus, often damaging the lining of the esophagus and causing symptoms like heartburn or chest pain.

Dr. William Richards, professor and chair of surgery at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and director of the USA Surgical Weight Loss Center, performs the LINX procedure at USA Health and was one of the authors of the study.

According to Dr. Richards, proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) like Prilosec and Nexium provide temporary relief for GERD symptoms, but they do not treat the underlying cause – a weak lower esophageal sphincter. "Once you've been on these medications for one or two years, the medication is no longer effective," he said. "That's where I come in as a surgeon."

LINX is the only device approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of GERD and has proven to eliminate dependence on medication and improve quality of life. The device consists of a small, flexible band of magnets that is surgically placed around the esophagus just above the stomach to help prevent reflux.



The multi-centered randomized, controlled trial followed 152 patients who were at least 21 years old and had moderate to severe regurgitation despite eight weeks of once-daily PPI therapy. USA Health was one of 21 sites throughout the United States that participated in the study.


After six months, 89 percent of patients who received the LINX implant reported relief of regurgitation compared with 10 percent of patients who were treated with twice-daily omeprazole. Furthermore, 81 percent of patients treated with LINX reported satisfaction with their current condition versus 2 percent of patients treated with twice-daily omeprazole.

Dr. Richards said candidates for the LINX system are patients who have symptoms of reflux, heartburn and regurgitation despite traditional medical therapy. Patients undergo a comprehensive evaluation that may include X-rays, endoscopy, and outpatient esophageal function testing.

"A skilled gastroenterologist should thoroughly examine what's going on and see if the LINX is right for you," he said.

Read the full results of the Caliber clinical trial published in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

Dr. Richards recently visited FOX 10 to discuss the procedure. [Watch the clip here.](#)

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USA Health launches Beautiful Beginnings Baby Expo at Children's & Women's Hospital



As the leader in births in the Mobile area, USA Health is introducing the Beautiful Beginnings Baby Expo, a new community event to showcase the exclusive services provided to expectant moms and new parents in the region.


Planned from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 10, the event

will be held rain or shine at USA Children's & Women's Hospital, 1700 Center Street, in Midtown Mobile. The baby expo is a free and family-friendly event celebrating expectant moms and families with children under age 4, and those who are considering becoming a parent.

The baby expo will include door prizes, exhibitors, guided hospital tours and opportunities to meet the care teams at the hospital. Demonstrations and other giveaways will be available from local vendors.

USA Children's & Women's Hospital offers the most advanced care in the region. Our team of physicians, nurses and technicians care for the medical needs of women and children with a family-centered approach. Should complications arise, expectant parents have peace of mind when they deliver at a hospital that offers a neonatal intensive care unit, the most advanced treatments and specialty-trained physicians readily available.

For information, call (251) 471-7262 or email beautifulbeginningsbabyexpo@gmail.com.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [9:50 AM](#) No comments: 

Monday, February 25, 2019

Med School Café video available - "Breast Cancer and Heart Disease"



Dr. Christopher Malozzi, assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and a cardiologist with USA Physicians Group, recently presented the Med School Café lecture, "Breast




cardiac side effects of breast cancer treatment, including hormone therapy, chemotherapy, and radiation. He also discussed the bidirectional long-term relationship between breast cancer treatment and cardiac disease and introduced the concept of cardio oncology.

Watch [Med School Café: Breast Cancer and Heart Disease](#) on YouTube or below.

Med School Cafe-Breast Cancer and Heart Disease



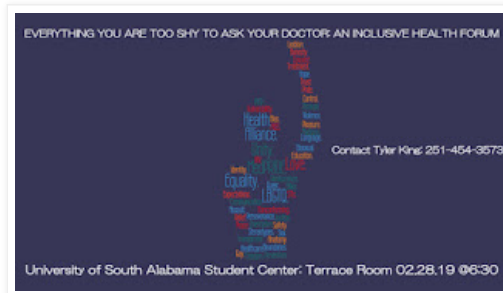
Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [3:20 PM](#) No comments: 


MedPride & Allies to co-host health forum

Rainbow Mobile and MedPride & Allies will host a health forum at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, at the USA Student Center in the Terrace Room. The LGBTQ+ community, as well as allies, are welcome to attend this inclusive event.

The forum will focus on all aspects of health with an emphasis on the concerns for LGBTQ+ health disparities. Planned Parenthood will be opening a discussion on sexual health maintenance, AIDS Alabama South will be offering free HIV testing, and there will be education about sexual assault and domestic violence. Additionally, local physicians and medical students will be available for open or anonymous questions about any aspect of health.

Light refreshments will be provided. For more information, contact Tyler King at (251) 454-3573.



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