

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, March 29, 2019

Dr. Om Jha wins international Mahatma Gandhi Expatriate Award



Dr. Om Jha holds a plastic sheet with EKG leads attached so the NICU team can run an EKG and actively resuscitate a newborn at the same time.

A decade ago, while working in a newborn nursery during a residency in Illinois, a nurse asked Dr. Om Jha for help because she couldn't manage to insert a catheter into an infant.

If only we could go through the abdomen, she said.

That got him thinking. If it was possible for adults it should also be possible for a newborn.

A native of India, Dr. Jha said working in an area with limited resources encourages you to come up with creative solutions.

So that's what he did.

His efforts to help the tiniest among us thrive has been recognized in recent years with several honors. In late 2018, Dr. Jha traveled to the London House of Commons to be presented with an NRI Welfare

Society of India Mahatma Gandhi Expatriate Award that was presented during the Global Achievers Conclave.

Each year the awards are presented to 25 people out of the 30 million non-resident Indians living around the world. His class included those from all walks of life and all parts of the globe. He has never learned who nominated him.

The person who suggested him clearly knew of Dr. Jha's passion to develop technology and new devices that lead to better outcomes for severely premature infants. Even before joining USA Health, he devoted himself to creating solutions to problems specific to that field.

Back in Illinois more than a decade ago, he entered a local innovation competition, garnering great interest in a product to allow a catheter to be placed in an infant's abdomen. Southern Illinois University eventually patented the device, and a Chicago company acquired the technology which is expected to be available to health care providers in the near future.

Then Dr. Jha went back to his primary duties as a pediatric resident.

A few years later, he met a neonatologist from USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital during a conference and learned about the hospital's success with

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resuscitating babies born as early as 22 weeks. Soon after, he departed southern California to take a job in Mobile at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.

At USA Health, his curiosity has led to numerous collaborations with his colleagues. Some of their projects include a plastic sheet with EKG leads attached so that the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) team can run an EKG and actively resuscitate a newborn at the same time, all while keeping a tiny baby warm. There's also a bacteria-proof cover for cell phones to be dispensed right next to the gloves and hand sanitizer when people approach the NICU. He's also developing ideas to increase the effectiveness of bilirubin lights and computer programs to help fight financial fraud in the health care system.

"Whenever you start these ideas, if you have the intent to help people, that's when you're able to get to the goal," said Dr. Jha. He starts with an idea and a rough sketch and — "if it's going to help a baby" — he'll put the time and effort into it. "The number one thing is that it should be helping the patient."

Living in the United States on an H1 visa, Dr. Jha is not allowed to be the majority owner of a company, so it's easier to focus on patient benefits rather than personal financial gain.


In 2015, he joined the University of South Alabama College of Medicine as an assistant professor of pediatrics with a specialty in neonatology, and in the summer of 2017 he started a social media campaign to raise awareness of the struggles of premature babies through the "Hair-Raising Challenge" — winning the Faculty Innovation Award from the USA National Alumni Association.

Dr. Jha, who is also a member of the Society of Physician Entrepreneurs, is a native of the Patna District of Bihar, India. He completed his medical education and a pediatric residency there, then repeated his residency at Southern Illinois University and a neonatology fellowship at the University of Southern California, before joining the University of South Alabama medical school faculty.

Everything about his chosen field suits him.

Working with extremely premature infants born after just 22 weeks gestation, you're fighting to help a child struggling between life and death, he said.

"It's not just the successful delivery and seeing the infant stay the course from one end of the spectrum to the other, from near-death to being able to sustain life independently," Dr. Jha said. "It's knowing this baby will be able to achieve everything in life."

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:27 AM](#) No comments: 

Med School Café now online - Technology in the Treatment of Diabetes

Dr. Wilburn Bolton III, assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and an endocrinologist with USA Health Physicians Group, presented the March Med School Café lecture, "Technology in the Treatment of Diabetes."

In his lecture, Dr. Bolton discussed technology advancements in the treatment of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, including glucose sensors, insulin pumps, and glucose sensor-augmented insulin pump therapy.

Watch [Med School Café - Technology and Diabetes](#) on YouTube or below.

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Med School Cafe - Technology and Diabetes



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Mobile Ranked 5th Fattest City in America: How We Can Slim Down



JagFIT recently expanded its facilities to a new gym at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital, so USA Health employees can more easily participate in challenges.

WalletHub recently released their data on the "2019 Fattest Cities in America," with Mobile ranking No. 5 overall and No. 1 in the health consequences portion – which includes data on share of adults with high cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity-related death.

Although these findings can be intimidating, Phyllus Justice, a diabetes resource coordinator with USA Health, said the report should serve as a catalyst to make healthier choices.

According to Justice, more than 80 percent of chronic diseases and premature death can be prevented by following a healthy dietary pattern, getting regular physical activity and not smoking.

Justice attributes Mobile's ranking to common diet and exercise habits seen in the South. "The Southeast United States, including Mobile, is known for their southern cooking. The bulk of our cuisine includes fried foods and fatty meats cooked in our vegetables – such as salt meat, ham hocks and bacon drippings," she said. "Most of these lifestyle habits have been passed down through the generations and it is how we have learned to live."

She also credits our current culture of seeking immediate gratification for the predicament. "We live in a fast world and want everything to be done quickly:

fast internet, fast food and fast weight loss," she said. "Weight loss and being healthy is a process and it requires building healthy habits into our life over time."

Committed to helping employees live a healthier lifestyle, the University of South Alabama recently created JagFIT@South. The program, which first launched in October of 2018, seeks to elevate health and well-being for the University community.

"JagFIT is a comprehensive well-being program that attempts to educate, motivate, inform and inspire our university community in all areas of wellness," said Brian Allred, director of campus recreation and committee chair of JagFIT. "The program provides information and resources dealing with nutrition, mental health, mindfulness, wellness events, health screenings and self-assessment tests. It is a one-stop, well-being resource for all USA employees."

Phil Craft, HVAC maintenance supervisor at USA, has been an active member of JagFIT since January. "I set a goal to get healthy again and JagFIT is making that possible," he said. "I've committed to doing better and I'm already down 28 pounds."

Each day, Craft and his wife – Marie Craft, a secretary in the department of microbiology at the USA College of Medicine – meet for lunch to go on a "date-walk."

Craft said the benefits of JagFIT extend beyond physical health. "It's also a mental stress reliever," he said. "I work a stressful job and it's nice to have the chance to unwind mentally with exercise."


For those looking to start their journey to a healthier life, Justice said best way is to start small, as small changes add up to big benefits. "You do not have to change everything at one time," she said. "Start with small changes in your food and activity. Eating a diet high in plant foods and low in processed foods is best for health and longevity."

She offers these tips:

1. Eat whole foods that grow in nature. Half of your dinner plate should be cooked vegetables or salad.
2. Eat more meals at home. Learn how to cook quick, go-to meals and get comfortable with the basics.
3. Stock your pantry with healthy basics such as olive and canola oils, onion, garlic and beans.
4. Learn how to season foods with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats instead of saturated fats.
5. Read food labels. Avoid food products containing ingredients that you wouldn't keep in your pantry. Also avoid foods that have some form of sugar listed among the first three ingredients.
6. Shop the peripheries of the grocery store and limit items that you get from the middle of the store, which have more added fat, salt, and sugar.
7. Make water your beverage of choice. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages.
8. Eat at the table, take your time eating and enjoy talking with friends and family. Do not eat standing up, in the car and preferably not by yourself if possible.
9. Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored.
10. Work physical activity into your day. Every 10 minutes that we walk adds up and counts.
11. Aim for a healthy 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Track your time with a phone app.

Justice stresses the importance of being determined, yet realistic when making the switch. "Life happens – we have birthdays, special occasions and go on vacations. It is what we usually eat and what we usually do that matters, not what we do every now and then."

For more information on JagFIT, visit
<https://www.southalabama.edu/programs/jagfit@south/>

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [9:40 AM](#) 1 comment: 

Thursday, March 28, 2019

April Med School Café to focus on melanoma prevention and treatment

The April Med School Café lecture will feature Dr. Harrison Howard, associate professor of surgery at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and a surgical oncologist with USA Health.




Dr. Howard will discuss the prevention, detection and treatment of advanced-stage melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. The lecture will be held Friday, April 12, at the 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. Howard earned his medical degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he also completed his residency training in surgery. He served as a surgical oncology fellow at the John Wayne Cancer Institute in Santa Monica, Calif. He is board certified in general surgery.

The Med School Café lecture and lunch are provided free of charge, but reservations are required. For more information or to make reservations, contact Kim Partridge at (251) 460-7770 or email kepartridge@health.southalabama.edu.

Med School Café is a free community lecture series sponsored by USA Health. Each month, faculty and physicians 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.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:34 PM](#) No comments: 

Rwanda mission participants gain new perspective on medicine and life



Participants in the medical mission trip to Rwanda operate on a patient in Kibogora Hospital.

"The anatomy and physiology of patients don't change across the world," Phillip Brennan reflected on his time at Kibogora Hospital in Rwanda. "The main differences were the buildings and tools used to practice surgery."

Brennan, a fourth-year student at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, recently returned from his first medical mission trip with the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama (CMMSA). "From operating on the smallest to the biggest cases, in poorly lit rooms with dull instruments to the most well-lit procedure rooms, to serving in virtually any role in the operating room," he said, "I felt comfortable in the positions I was given responsibility and autonomy."

No matter the setting or the patient, the goal of care is always the same, Brennan noted. "In Rwanda," he said, "it is particularly striking that although they have a fraction of resources available to practice surgery compared to the U.S., the goal of care does not change – and that is to ensure the very best outcome for the patient."

Brennan joined fellow medical students, resident physicians, attending physicians and other support personnel on the annual trip, started in 2011 by CMMSA and Dr. Carl Albertson, an orthopaedic surgeon from Fairhope, Ala., and his wife, Francie Albertson. The Albertsons now spend half of the year in Rwanda at Kibogora Hospital.

"Each year there are patient losses we know would be preventable in the States, and that is difficult," said Dr. Keith Peevy, professor of neonatology at the USA College of Medicine and a neonatologist with USA Health. "But we also know that there would be more without the training and equipment and the ongoing, year-round collaboration we share with them; so we accept what we cannot change, but continue to look for ways to improve their delivery of care."

Kibogora Hospital is a referral hospital for complex obstetrics patients from 12 health centers in the region. During the last seven years, through the addition of monitoring, I.V. pumps, CPAP and improved oxygen delivery, the mortality rate in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) has fallen in what is a high-risk delivery population.

Dr. Hannah Bahakel, a pediatric resident with USA Health who earned her medical degree from USA in 2017, rounded in the NICU alongside Dr. Peevy, local doctors and nurses. She was struck by the effects of nutrition on prenatal and antenatal development, as she saw several cases of protein calorie malnutrition not typically seen with proper maternal and prenatal care.

"I was amazed by how strong the Rwandan people are," she said. "The mothers would walk to the hospital every day to see their babies, sometimes from hours away."

Her husband, Dr. Cole Bahakel, a radiology resident with USA Health who earned his medical degree from USA in 2016, performed and interpreted radiographs and ultrasounds. He, too, saw patients who traveled far for care. "There were patients that would travel for days on foot with broken bones and festering wounds to be treated," he said. "It was an incredible feeling to realize that although I didn't know everything and I'm not yet an expert in my field, I was able to help some people that might have otherwise had a more difficult or prolonged illness."



Dr. Anna Crutchfield returned to Rwanda this year as a resident physician, after participating in the mission as a medical student in 2016.

Dr. Anna Crutchfield participated in the Rwanda mission in 2016 as a USA medical student and knew she wanted to go back at some point. She is now in her third year of residency training in family medicine at the University of South Carolina/Palmetto Health in Columbia, S.C. This year Dr. Crutchfield was able to return to Kibogora Hospital – this time as an alumna and mentor to medical students she remembered as first-years when she was a senior.

"It was great to see how they have progressed," she said.

Dr. Crutchfield said she encourages every physician to go on at least one mission trip. She plans to return to Rwanda once again in two years, after completing her fellowship training. "It helps to give you a different perspective on the medical field and life in general. The experiences I had in Rwanda I will take with me forever," she said.

David Mulkey, a fourth-year student at the USA College of Medicine, said being able to pray with patients and the relationships he built in Rwanda are what he will remember most from the trip. One of the most impactful experiences of the trip for him was sewing up the grandson of a surgeon who worked at Kibogora Hospital.

Mulkey will do his residency training in family medicine at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. However, his well-rounded medical education at USA gave him a solid background to work in a variety of specialties in Rwanda, including pediatrics, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and surgery. "USA prepared me exceedingly well with excellent pre-clinical instruction and amazing hands-on experience during my clinical years," he said.

Dr. Peevy said the mission is a "two-way street" in which everyone learns from one another. The education shared among the mission participants and the local staff runs deeper than medical information; it is also a cultural exchange. "You cannot teach about other cultures from a distance," he said. "Students, physicians, and other professionals, medical and non-medical, gain an understanding of life there that cannot be achieved without that experience."

Several participants pointed to a special experience called "spiritual rounds," in which some of the missionaries, with the help of local college students as translators, would walk around the wards and pray with patients who wanted to participate. "There were times when the entire ward would break out in song, which was an experience unlike anything you'd see in the States," Dr. Cole Bahakel said.


Dr. Peevy said, "We are always astounded at the beauty of the country, the friendliness of the people, the gratitude that they display, and acceptance we receive as outsiders appearing for three weeks."

He said each year he returns with a greater awareness of how he finds real peace as a Christian. "The trip is an opportunity to do some soul searching regarding priorities in life," Dr. Peevy said. "Seeing people who have little in material means

but deep faith in God challenges the believers on the trip to look inside themselves at what is important to them and why.”

Visit www.cmmsa.org to learn more about the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama.



Posted by Med School Watercooler at [2:06 PM](#) No comments: 

Monday, March 25, 2019

University Urology welcomes nurse practitioner




Elizabeth Lewis recently joined USA Health University Urology as a nurse practitioner.

Prior to joining USA Health, Lewis served as a nurse practitioner and clinical manager at Urology and Oncology Specialists, PC, in Mobile.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing from the University of South Alabama. She is certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

University Urology is located at 3290 Dauphin St., Suite 301. To make an appointment, call (251) 660-5930.

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Twin medical students compete in the classroom and in track and field



Twin brothers Ethan Boyd, left, and Thomas Boyd, right, are first-year medical students at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and athletes on the USA men's track and field team.

While they were still playing high school football in Oneonta, Ala., brothers Ethan and Thomas Boyd were already certain of a few things. Chief among them was that they wanted to become physicians, followed closely by the desire to attend the University of South Alabama.

Fast forward a few years and the Boyd brothers – twins born minutes apart – are finishing their first year of medical school at the USA College of Medicine. And in a surprise to both, they are attending the university on track and field scholarships, having traded the pigskin for Sun Belt Conference competitions in events like hammer throw and shot put.

The 23-year-olds are fiercely competitive, but not in the way many of their classmates and teammates assume: they are best friends, study mates and the one person on campus each is sure they can trust 100 percent. The Boyds challenge each other in the film room, as well as in preparing for the classroom. And Thomas, the younger brother by 120 seconds, says that connection helps them be their best selves.

"I think that in whatever we're doing, it tends to elevate us a little bit, because we're really competitive in pretty much everything we do," Thomas said. "With us being so close and doing everything the same, part of that is competing against each other."

Both agree their mom is the origin of that competitiveness, and they love her all the more for it.

"Growing up, if I made a 95 on a test and Thomas made a 98, it would be, 'Ethan, why didn't you make a 98?'" Ethan said. "I'm not sure how everybody else does it, but my mom was the best."

He credits his pediatrician back home in Oneonta with awakening the desire to pursue medicine, all the way back in elementary school.

"He made it to where it wasn't such a brutal thing to go to the doctor," Ethan said. "And I always thought that made a big difference."

He and Thomas are currently in their second semester as medical students, and the experience has provided a few surprises, contrasted against their expectations as younger men. Ethan said the first few days doing lab work with cadavers was a bit of a shock but, "you get accustomed to it pretty quickly and I've had a good experience."



Ethan Boyd, left, and Thomas Boyd, right, are finishing their first year of medical school at USA.

For Thomas, the surprise was the flexibility of his schedule, something both men said set the university apart, especially for student-athletes. Initially he was doubtful he'd be able to continue to compete in track and field when he started medical school.

"I know for me, that has been a huge help," Thomas said. "As flexible as they've made things, it's allowed that to be a reality."

But it's no small feat for the Boyds to be highly competitive as redshirt seniors on the track and field team, and keep up their studies as they move through medical school. Both credit the discipline learned as athletes training year-round, and accountability to the other brother, but it still falls on each man to make sure the work gets done, and done correctly.

"It is a lot to handle, but I think you just have to be where your feet are, give 100 percent where you are and manage your time wisely," Ethan said. "When you're doing school work, you have to completely focus on school."

"When I'm out practicing, I can't be thinking about what I learned in school that day or thinking about what happened on the test."


Ethan and Thomas have been fortunate during their playing careers to avoid major injury, but both say they are interested in pursuing orthopedics – careers that could cross over into sports medicine. And it's possible one or both could end up as surgeons, although Thomas might shift to another role in the operating theater: anesthesiologist.

"I liked anesthesiology growing up, and thought it was a cool job, just based off of how much you get to see," Thomas said. "But, being in sports in high school, a lot of the doctors I knew were orthopedic surgeons. So when I started shadowing, the more I watched, the more I thought, 'I really think I would enjoy this line of work.'"

To listen to the brothers, USA is the exact place they need to be as they discover what their career passions are, and how to best achieve them. Coaches and professors at the university have proven a willingness to help them reach their goals, but it's not something the Boyds take for granted. Neither is the support of their younger brother or parents, who recently relocated to Virginia.

As they move forward through medical school, they continue to rely on each other, and the competitive spirit that has fueled them as far back as T-ball, when they were children.

"It's great to have a friend in what you're doing," Thomas said. "And if you are having a problem, being able to bounce that off of somebody, whether in track or in school, there's always a different set of ears that a lot of times will understand something that you didn't quite pick up."

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