

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, June 7, 2019

Rodriguez awarded NIH diversity supplement



Yelitza Rodriguez, a graduate student in the University of South Alabama Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program, recently received a diversity supplement from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The supplement – which aims to improve the diversity of the research workforce by recruiting and supporting students, post doctorates, and eligible investigators from groups that have been shown to be underrepresented in health-related research – will provide additional funding for a \$1.52 million NIH R01 grant led by Steve Lim, Ph.D., assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the USA College of Medicine.

African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians are among the racial and ethnic groups shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research. "As a female of Hispanic descent, this award makes me feel empowered, welcomed into the research community, and will help kick off my scientific career," Rodriguez said.

Lim said the NIH offers this opportunity and helps support the College of Medicine's mission to be more diverse in the recruitment of scientists. "I believe the NIH Diversity Supplement is a great way to give under represented groups an opportunity that they may not normally have," he said. "I am determined to support Yelitza, and this diversity grant helps me support her by providing a more well-rounded research training opportunity."

"Underrepresented groups often cannot pursue health-related research due to the lack of opportunities or proper orientation," Rodriguez added. "This diversity grant helps by offering minorities an opportunity to pursue health-related research, with the hope that they will go back to help and educate their communities about opportunities like this one."

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Together, Rodriguez and Lim will study the role of FAK in vascular inflammation. Vascular inflammation is caused by sustained activation of nuclear factor- κ B (NF- κ B), a pro-inflammatory transcription factor that drives pro-inflammatory gene expression.

"Our new data indicate that inhibition of FAK catalytic activity blocks sustained NF- κ B activity, reducing vascular inflammation and atherosclerosis lesions," Lim said. This supplement allows Rodriguez to investigate a new paradigm for FAK cellular localization during vascular inflammation that was not originally proposed in Dr. Lim's NIH R01 grant.

As an "anti-inflammatory" therapy for atherosclerosis remains elusive, Rodriguez and Lim's research into FAK-mediated inflammation during atherosclerosis is considered to have high potential in finding a new therapeutic target.

The Research Project Grant, or R01 grant, is the original and historically oldest grant mechanism used by NIH. The R01 provides support for health-related research and development based on the mission of the NIH. [Learn more about Lim's grant here.](#)

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:19 AM](#) No comments: 

USA Health partners with City of Orange Beach to improve emergency medical care



USA Health and the City of Orange Beach announce a new partnership for emergency medicine services at a press conference. From left, Orange Beach Fire Chief Justin Pearce; Edward Panacek, M.D., chair of emergency medicine at USA Health; Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon; and Owen Bailey, CEO of USA Health.

USA Health and the City of Orange Beach are bringing a new and progressive care concept to the region through a partnership for emergency medicine services.

Beginning in July, resident physicians in the USA Health Department of Emergency Medicine will team with paramedics at the Orange Beach Fire Department. This effort will expand the breadth of health care knowledge and experience at emergency scenes while helping the emergency medicine residents gain a deeper understanding of what occurs, from the initial alert when the call to 911 is dispatched all the way to the emergency department via transport.

"This partnership between the city and USA Health is a trailblazing effort that will provide high-quality, second-to-none emergency patient care for residents and visitors in Orange Beach," Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon said. "While no one asks for a medical emergency, it will be comforting to know that when someone calls 911 in Orange Beach there is a good possibility they will have an emergency medicine physician resident responding with our highly trained EMTs."

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John Marymont, M.D., vice president for medical affairs and dean of the USA College of Medicine, said the partnership typifies how USA Health is working to transform medicine in the Upper Gulf Coast Region.

"We are bringing new ideas and new practices to the area to provide even better care to the people we serve," Marymont said. "We are honored to be able to join the City of Orange Beach in this endeavor to enhance emergency care."

In their second year, residents will join the Orange Beach Fire Department crews on a rotational basis, responding to 911 calls within the city that will provide a higher level of knowledge and care to the community. Additionally, an attending physician from USA Health will be available at all times, further enhancing the care that will be provided to citizens. Orange Beach paramedics will have the ability to work with University Hospital and Children's & Women's Hospital to enhance their clinical skills and through on-scene clinical decision making they will be able to apply that training to future incidents when the resident physician may not be present.

"This training allows our residents to gain a deeper understanding of what their EMS colleagues undertake at the scene of an emergency," said Edward Panacek, M.D., chair of the USA Department of Emergency Medicine. "Through this training, the residents will be able to envision what is occurring at the scene and the complexity of the situation. Ultimately, this should enhance the care to the people who need it."

Orange Beach Fire Chief Justin Pearce said the city is fortunate to have this new relationship with USA Health. "It brings a new level of healthcare to our community that few others have been able to achieve," Pearce said. "The opportunity to help train future emergency physicians while increasing our department's medical knowledge and service to Orange Beach is truly exciting and groundbreaking."


Paul Henning, M.D., associate professor of emergency medicine and an emergency medicine physician with USA Health, will serve as the medical director for the Orange Beach EMS program.

USA Health established a new emergency medicine residency program, starting this summer, to begin to overcome a severe shortage of trained emergency physicians in the state. Panacek noted that Alabama ranks 49th in states in terms of the number of board-certified emergency physicians per capita. The new program calls for six new residents each year in the three-year program and will increase the number of new emergency physicians training in the state by 60 percent.

"One of our roles is serving as a resource throughout our region," said Owen Bailey, chief executive officer for USA Health. "We felt that having a formal affiliation agreement with Orange Beach was a significant demonstration of our desire to join with our community partner to provide much needed high-quality care to the people of our region not only today, but in the future through the training of the next generation of care providers."

"We are very excited to have the resources and expertise provided by the City of Orange Beach and USA Health available in the community," said Daniel McKinney, chief executive officer for South Baldwin Regional Medical Center. "As healthcare providers we all must look at innovative ways to continue to strengthen the care delivered in this region."

[Read AL.com's coverage of the partnership between USA Health and the City of Orange Beach.](#)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [1:23 PM](#) No comments: 

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Long-distance friendship leads to heartburn relief for New York state resident



Dr. Jack Di Palma and Bill Moylan have been friends since high school. Through their longstanding friendship, Moylan was able to learn about and schedule a LINX procedure for treating GERD at USA Health University Hospital. The two friends attended a University of South Alabama baseball game the night before the procedure.

Using the social media platform Facebook, a resident of New York state and a USA Health gastroenterologist have maintained their close friendship that started when they were both in high school. Through this long-distance connection, our physician was able to help his friend learn about a new procedure for the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and introduce him to another experienced USA Health physician for quick relief of his friend's symptoms.

Bill Moylan grew up with Dr. Jack Di Palma in Bellerose, Long Island, New York, and the two first played music together in the Bishop Reilly High School band before forming their own wedding band with two other friends. Moylan worked as a police officer and detective in Nassau County in New York. After 26 years of police service, he left law enforcement to work in cyber security consulting, from which he recently retired. He lives in Massapequa, New York, on Long Island's South Shore. Di Palma, after graduating from medical school and service in the Air Force, joined the USA College of Medicine in Mobile.



In 1972, Dr. Jack Di Palma, keyboard, and Bill Moylan, guitar, play in the wedding band they formed with two other friends called The Generation Gap.

With the distance between the two, they have been able to keep their friendship up with regular visits and staying in touch through Facebook.

"Social media is irreplaceable as far as keeping in touch with people that you've been separated from by time or distance," Moylan said, adding that he sees a lot of the posts that Di Palma posts about USA Health.

It was on Facebook that Moylan saw a post Di Palma made about a GERD presentation. In discussing the condition further, Di Palma suggested that Moylan, who was battling with GERD, consider the new LINX procedure, sending him additional information on the laparoscopic surgery.

The LINX procedure essentially uses a set of magnetic beads to assist the lower esophageal sphincter in doing its job. Moylan said that, as a handyman, the mechanical solution aspect of the procedure that addresses the problem rather than just treating the symptoms appealed to him. He also noted that the surgery

does not involve any anatomical changes and can be reversed if necessary.

Moylan educated himself as much as possible about the surgery and decided to pursue the idea further, so Di Palma told him about USA Health's Dr. Bill Richards' experience and success with the surgery and suggested he have the procedure at USA Health University Hospital.

In dealing with GERD, Moylan said the most noticeable symptoms were a constant throat clearing, choking at night, and a disruption of his sleep. It was this that impacted him the most and ultimately led him to have to take double doses of protein pump inhibitors, which are used to treat GERD symptoms.

"If you don't get a good night's sleep, then your whole life is affected," he said. "It impacts your whole day. It impacts your ability to work and enjoy life and your interactions with others."

A month and a half post-surgery, Moylan had already seen a great improvement in his heartburn symptoms and his ability to sleep.

"Prior to surgery, I was frequently awakened at night due to regurgitation. My symptoms have greatly improved if not eliminated entirely at this point," he said. "I no longer take the double-dose acid reflux prescription medication that I have been taking for years. I have had no heartburn or other symptoms of GERD since the surgery."


Moylan said that he was released from the hospital the same day as his surgery and the laparoscopic incisions have healed well. He felt very well prepared to deal with the recovery based on the guidelines provided and has had very little pain.

"My overall experience with at USA Health was very positive," Moylan said. "Everyone from the administrative staff and medical teams were friendly, helpful and extremely professional."

When choosing where to have his surgery, Moylan credited the USA Health College of Medicine as being one of the main reasons he chose to have his surgery at USA in Mobile.

"A hospital's close association with a medical school working on new or improved surgical techniques and alternate solutions to medical issues is where you're likely to see breakthrough approaches first," he said.

[Learn more about the LINX procedure at USA Health.](#)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [4:04 PM](#) No comments: 

Monday, June 3, 2019

Pediatric grand rounds to address posterior urethral valves



Frank R. Cerniglia Jr., M.D., section head of pediatric urology at Ochsner Health System, will present the next pediatric grand rounds.

His lecture, "Posterior Urethral Valves: Before, During, and After" is set for 8 a.m. Friday, June 21, in the Strada Patient Care Center first-floor conference room.


Cerniglia will discuss the embryology of posterior urethral valves, the effect of the obstruction on the child, the surgical correction of posterior urethral valves, and the integrated care of the

child after surgical correction.

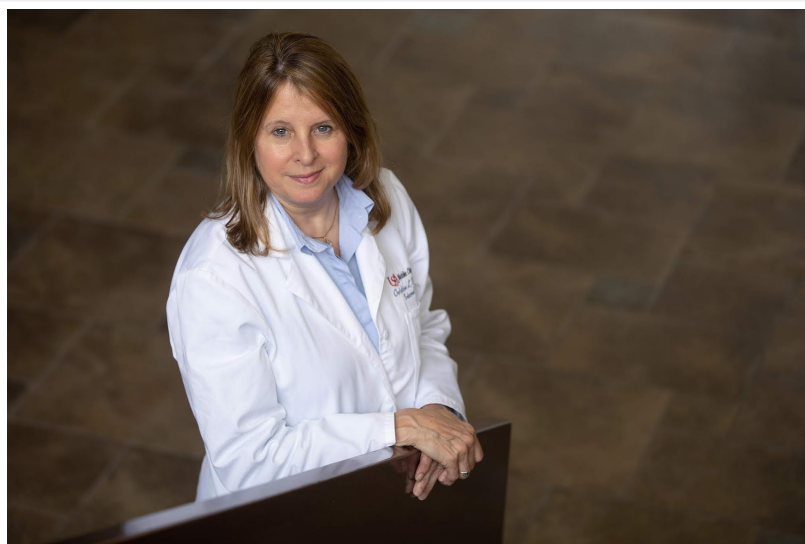
Pediatric grand rounds is every third Friday of the month. The event is open to USA faculty, staff and students. A light breakfast, coffee and beverages will be

provided.

For more information, contact Nicole Laden at nladen@health.southalabama.edu or (251) 415-8688.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:08 AM](#) No comments: 

Dr. Christine Fouty joins USA Health University Hospital as hospitalist



USA Health University Hospital is expanding its care team with the addition of Dr. Christine Fouty, a board-certified internal medicine physician who will see patients in the region's only academic health care setting.

To enhance patient-centered care, University Hospital has hired several physicians to serve as hospitalists on the staff of more than 1,900-employees. A hospitalist is a physician who typically is not in private practice and instead focuses his or her attention on caring for patients within a hospital.

"As a hospitalist," Fouty said, "you can spend as much time as you need to with patients and their families and it gives you the opportunity to determine the challenges the patients are facing in the hospital and at home."

The extra time can be vital, she said, when trying to determine how someone came to need acute care. "I try to find out what causes people to get into a health care crisis," Fouty said. "Are they taking their medication? Can they afford their medication? Do they have a primary care provider?"

The role of a hospitalist was officially defined in 1996, when the term was coined in a New England Journal of Medicine article. It was becoming increasingly more difficult for internists in private practice to see patients in their offices and then travel to hospitals to round on more patients in the evenings or early mornings.


Having someone within a hospital dedicated to navigating a very sick patient through multiple procedures and tests has become invaluable.

Fouty, who has practiced medicine for more than 22 years, said she enjoys being part of a larger care team: "I learn something every day. I love the nurses, the case managers, and the multidisciplinary approach we take in the hospital."

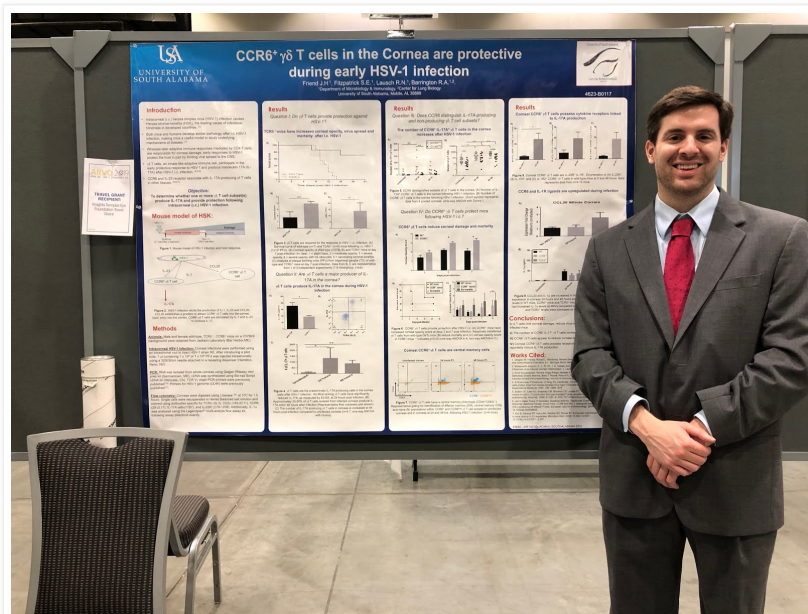
Fouty is a member of the Salvation Army's Family Haven and the Homeless Coalition of the Alabama Gulf Coast, where she serves as the chairman of the Discharge Planning Committee. The committee's task is to prevent discharge to homelessness from hospitals, jails and foster care. The group is working on a medical respite care project to provide care for homeless individuals who are too ill to recover from an injury or illness on the street, but are not sick enough to

stay in a hospital.

She earned a medical degree from the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine. Her husband, Brian W. Fouty M.D., is a pulmonologist and Professor of Internal Medicine at the USA Health College of Medicine. They have three children.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:53 AM](#) No comments: 

USA medical student presents eye research at international meeting



Jack Friend, a rising fourth-year medical student at the USA College of Medicine, presents results from his research project at a meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Jack Friend, a rising fourth-year medical student at the USA Health College of Medicine, presented a study examining early immune responses in the cornea at a recent meeting of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The research project documented immune responses occurring in the cornea of the eye following an infection by the Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV-1). "This is an important area of focus in eye research because HSV-1 is the leading cause of infectious blindness in developed countries around the world," Friend said.

Using an experimental model, the researchers studied a type of lymphocyte called a gamma delta T cell. They found that a certain subset of gamma delta T cells helps to limit the corneal damage, reduces the spread of the HSV-1 virus and aids in survival following infection. The research also showed that the T cells produce a specific type of protein called IL-17 that helps with the defensive responses.


"In the future, we hope to look for a vaccine target to help limit the damage caused by the virus, and this is a good start toward that process," Friend said.

He collaborated on the project with others at USA, including Dr. Robert A. Barrington, associate professor of microbiology and immunology; Dr. Robert N. Lausch, professor emeritus of microbiology; and graduate student Steffani Fitzpatrick.

"Jack's focus and determination to contribute in this project has helped move the research forward, leading to new insights and possibly new therapeutic angles for ocular HSV-1 infection," Barrington said.

A native of Mobile, Friend intends to apply to ophthalmology residency programs

following graduation. He received a Knights Templar Eye Foundation Travel Grant and funding from the University of South Alabama Student Government Association to attend the meeting April 28 to May 2.

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