

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, August 30, 2019

USA medical students named to Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society



Eleven fourth-year medical students at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine have been elected to the Beta Chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society.

They include Erin S. Bouska, Joseph M. Cortopassi, Jr., Davis C. Diamond, Aaron J. Dinerman, Travis B. Goodloe III, Hannah M. Ficarino, Tyler J. Kaelin, Will A. Martin, Marie Siow, M. Patrick Steadman and Daniel P. Zieman.

"Being elected into AOA is likely the highest honor that can be achieved by a medical student," said Jon Simmons, M.D., Beta Chapter Councilor and associate professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine. "In addition to proving academic excellence, the student must also display humanistic characteristics like honesty, honorable conduct, morality, virtue, unselfishness, ethical ideals, dedication to serving others, and leadership."

AOA, a professional medical organization, recognizes and advocates for excellence in scholarship and the highest ideals in the profession of medicine. Members have demonstrated a compelling drive to do well and to advance the medical profession and exemplify the highest standards of professionalism.

The top 25 percent of a medical school class is eligible for nomination to the society, and up to 16 percent may be elected based on leadership, character, community service and professionalism. The AOA motto is "Be Worthy to Serve the Suffering."

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Members may also be elected by chapters after demonstrating scholarly achievement and professional contributions and values after medical school and during their careers in medicine.

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Thursday, August 29, 2019

Macaluso named professor and chair of microbiology and immunology at USA College of Medicine



Kevin R. Macaluso, Ph.D., is the new chair of microbiology and immunology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. He is shown with boxes of equipment and supplies as he sets up his lab in the Medical Sciences Building.

A passion for discovery and inspiring a new generation of scientists drew Kevin R. Macaluso, Ph.D., to a career as an educator and scientist. This month, he joined the University of South Alabama College of Medicine as a professor and Locke Distinguished Chair of Microbiology and Immunology.

Previously, he was the Mary Louise Martin Professor in the department of pathobiological sciences at Louisiana State University (LSU) and director of the National Institutes of Health-supported Veterinary Student Summer Scholars Program at LSU.

"There's such a strong history here at the University of South Alabama regarding Rickettsia research," Macaluso said. "I hope to continue to grow the program and facilitate progress with our talented faculty and staff."

Macaluso's research focuses on the interplay between Rickettsia and arthropod vectors, resulting in transmission of the bacterial pathogens to vertebrate hosts. This can include tick- and flea-borne spotted fever agents. His studies on transmission models of rickettsioses have been supported by funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since 2001, with NIH funding for his research extended through 2020 by a number of awards including a NRSA K22 Career Development Award, two NIH R21 awards and two current R01 awards.

"After starting my faculty position at LSU, I focused my research on identifying the tick-derived molecular mechanisms associated with rickettsial infection of ticks," he said. "We have been able to identify and functionally characterize tick molecules activated during rickettsial infection and identify the first tick receptor for rickettsial adherence/invasion. We also have worked vigorously towards developing an animal model of *R. parkeri* rickettsiosis. This will be essential for analysis of rickettsial genetic mutants and vaccine testing."


Macaluso earned his bachelor degree in Biological Science from Colorado State University and his master's degree in Biology from Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. In 2000, Macaluso was awarded his Ph.D. in Entomology from Oklahoma State University. In August, he accepted an invitation to become a member of the Federal Advisory Committee for the Tick-Borne Disease Working Group within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Since 2009, Macaluso has served on the NIH-NIAID Vector Biology study section,

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Military Infectious Disease Research Program peer review and as ad hoc reviewer for other organizations including the Wellcome Trust. His laboratory has published more than 60 papers in peer-reviewed journals. Since 2015 he has served as the subject editor for the Journal of Medical Entomology.


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Monday, August 26, 2019

Clyde G. Huggins Award for Summer Research winners announced



The recipients of the 2019 University of South Alabama College of Medicine Clyde G. Huggins Award for Summer Research are shown with their mentors. Recipients are, seated from left, Brittany Jackson, Jessica Pham, Corey Phillis, Bradley Schuler and Brandon Rivers. Mentors are, standing from left, Erin Ahn, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry; Donna Cioffi, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry; William Richards, M.D., professor and chair of surgery; Madhuri Mulekar, Ph.D., professor and chair of mathematics and statistics; Michael Francis, Ph.D., assistant professor of physiology and cell biology; and Robert Barrington, Ph.D., associate professor of microbiology. The award honors the memory of Clyde G. "Sid" Huggins, who served as the first dean of students for the USA College of Medicine.

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Mark Your Calendar: Randall W. Powell Endowed Memorial Lectureship



The 2019 Randall W. Powell Endowed Memorial Lectureship in Pediatric Surgery, hosted by the University of South Alabama department of surgery, will feature Shawn D. St. Peter, M.D., surgeon-in-chief of the department of surgery and professor of pediatric surgery at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine.


St. Peter will present the first lecture, titled "Training, Medical Decision Making and Autonomy While Minimizing Variation Through Protocols," on Sept. 5 at 4:30 p.m. at the Strada Patient Care Center. His second lecture titled "Equipoise, Innovation and the Role of



ace on Sept. 6 at 7 a.m. at the USA Health
conference room.

The lectureship is named in honor of Randall Powell, M.D., former professor of surgery and pediatrics at the University College of Medicine, who passed away in 2017. As a pediatric surgeon, Powell belonged to a small group of surgeons who trained beyond general surgery residency in order to care for neonates and children with all the complex congenital defects with the understanding of the different physiology of the growing child. While at USA, Powell was a professor in the department of surgery and director of the division of pediatric surgery.

Both lectures are CME accredited. For more information, contact the USA department of surgery at (251) 445-8230.

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Block party for a cause: increasing vaccination rates in rural Alabama



Recently, more than 450 people took part in a back-to-school block party at City Drugs of Grove Hill, a town of less than 1,500 in Clarke County, Alabama. Amid the face painting, school supply raffle, shaved ice and inflatables, the event sought to fill a real need in the county -- get more children and youth vaccinated against human papillomavirus (HPV) and other diseases.

"The event was a great opportunity to do something special and fun for the community while offering extremely important vaccines and education," said Casey L. Daniel, Ph.D., a cancer researcher and assistant professor of family medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

Daniel organized the event as part of the kickoff to a pilot study to increase rates of HPV vaccinations. Her team partnered with a local community pharmacy, City Drugs, which joined Vaccines for Children, a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost for children whose families are unable to pay. Almost 70 percent of children in Clarke County are Medicaid-eligible.

"Clarke County has the lowest HPV vaccination rate in the state," Daniel said. "Through our work on this study we have created a new, local access point where these children can be vaccinated, which is so important because the HPV vaccine can protect adolescents against six different cancers."

In the two weeks since the event, 84 vaccinations, including 28 against HPV, were administered. "Families in Clarke County now have new pharmacy option where they can receive the HPV vaccine and other vaccines in a very convenient

setting with longer hours, given by a healthcare provider they know and trust," she said. "We are confident that this will increase education, awareness and vaccination rates in Clarke County, and hope to expand this model to other counties soon."

Pharmacist Stacie Turberville, PharmD, owner of City Drugs, said she is passionate about the importance of vaccinations. "As a mother, I want every child to be protected against disease and, in the case of the HPV vaccine, protected against cancer," Turberville said. "Pharmacists are both very knowledgeable about immunizations and highly trained in vaccine administration. Our profession can help to fill this need."

Volunteering at the block party were several medical students from the USA College of Medicine and seniors in USA's Honors College, who provided education about HPV and the HPV vaccine to families. A local dentist, Pine Belt Dental, provided bags with free toothbrushes, toothpastes and dental floss.

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USA Health welcomes new interventional cardiologist



Amod Amritphale, M.D., F.A.C.C., recently joined USA Health as assistant professor of cardiology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and an interventional cardiologist with USA Health University Hospital.

As an interventional cardiologist, Amritphale said his main goal is to help people who experienced significant limitations due to chest pain or shortness of breath get back on their feet.


When a patient presents with a heart attack or heart failure, they are quickly treated in the emergency department at USA Health University Hospital. Many times, they often require a procedure in the cardiac catheterization lab. There, Amritphale helps locate and open any blockages in their heart vessels, and helps improve their heart using newer technologies and help evaluate their hemodynamics.

Growing up, Amritphale said he always had a niche for helping others and being able to bring joy to the eyes of someone in need. He continues to mirror this mindset in medicine as he uses his experience and training to help, treat, cure and educate patients in leading a better life. "The most important part of my job is the opportunity to teach patients and families the importance of healthy living and changing their lifestyle to live longer and healthier lives," he said.

According to Amritphale, USA Health embodies all of the components that are vital for a well-rounded physician. "USA Health gave me the perfect niche where I

can help the population improve their health and outlook, teach budding cardiologists and physicians, while also working alongside the best cardiologists in the nation," he said. "I have always been in love with southern culture and my family and I are proud to call Mobile our new home."

Amritphale earned his medical degree from the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College in Jubalpur, India. He completed his residency training in internal medicine at the University of Nevada School of Medicine and a cardiovascular diseases fellowship at Louisiana State University New Orleans where he was named Outstanding Fellow. He recently completed his fellowship training in interventional cardiology at the Oklahoma University Health Sciences Center.

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