

# Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, February 20, 2020

## Solidarity Week helps med students 'get to know our patients'



Jeremy Towns, fourth-year medical student and Gold Humanism Honor Society member, delivers treats to Mary McNeal, a ward clerk at University Hospital.

Members of the University of South Alabama chapter of the Arnold P. Gold Humanism in Medicine Honor Society paid special visits to patients and hospital staff last week as part of Solidarity Week, a national initiative designed to remind students and healthcare employees of the importance of compassion in medicine.

"Solidarity Week allows us to place the focus on getting to know our patients better as well as showing gratitude to the unsung heroes of USA Health," said Destini A. Smith, a fourth-year medical student at the USA College of Medicine who serves as secretary/treasurer of the chapter. "Sometimes, we focus so much on the patient's clinical problem that we forget about the patient."

On Friday, GHHS members hand-delivered red gift baskets to nursing stations, and thank-you notes to faculty and staff at the hospitals. Smith said the activity recognizes the importance of teamwork in healthcare. "We sometimes take other members of the healthcare team for granted, though the physician is not the only one caring for the patient," she said.

Two Solidarity Week initiatives, "Tell Me More" and "Doctors Should," encouraged students to engage patients in meaningful conversations. Under "Tell Me More," the students talked with patients about what matters most to them rather than why they are in the hospital. With "Doctors Should," the students sought suggestions from patients on how physicians can practice more compassionate care. The ideas were written on sticky notes and placed on posters to display in physician lounges.

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"These events are important because they remind physicians and students that the patients are more than just an illness that brings them to the hospital," said T.J. Hundley, M.D., associate dean for medical education and chapter advisor. "They are people with families, jobs, hobbies and much more. Effective care involves more than just selecting tests and choosing treatments. It involves empathy, understanding and kindness."



Gold Humanism Honor Society members, from left, Dala Eloubeidi, Joseph Cortopassi, Destini Smith, Dr. Spencer Liles, Patrick Steadman and Jeremy Towns wish second-year medical students good luck on the USMLE Step 1 exam.

Solidarity Week activities also focus on wellness for medical students. GHHS chapter members created posters for second-year medical students to wish them good luck on the Step 1 exam and to remind them that they are never alone on their journey. Another new activity was Humanistic BINGO, in which students participate in tasks related to compassion and self-care to complete a five-in-a-row BINGO and compete to win a drawing. This year's winners were second-year medical student Michelle Nguyen and first-year medical student Kasey Grant.

The national Gold Humanism Honor Society established National Solidarity Day for Compassionate Care in 2011 to highlight the nationwide movement promoting provider-patient relationships based on caring, personalization and mutual respect. Solidarity Day was expanded to Solidarity Week in 2016.

[See more photos from Solidarity Week on Flickr.](#)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:04 PM](#) No comments:

**Tuesday, February 18, 2020**

## Bull to retire from USA College of Medicine



Sharon Bull, associate director of financial aid at the USA College of Medicine, talks with a medical student in her office. She is retiring at the end of February after 30 years of service.

Sharon Bull, associate director of financial aid at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, is retiring after 30 years of service. Bull is the only person in the medical school's history to serve in the position.

"Sharon has devoted her entire career to not only assisting our College of Medicine students with their financial aid but also in instructing them about true financial literacy. She daily provides our students guidance as they proceed from tasks such as paying bills, establishing accounts and mastering a budget to

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investigating loan consolidation and repayment,” said Kelly Roveda, M.D., associate dean of student affairs for USA’s College of Medicine. “Sharon’s wisdom will be missed.”

A USA graduate, Bull earned a degree in communications and started working at the College of Medicine about seven years after graduation. The new position was created to give medical students better access to financial aid, an important issue for students that often influences their career paths.

During her career, Bull has assisted 30 classes and 2,015 graduates with financing their medical education, helping with debt management, teaching financial literacy and distributing scholarships.

“I’ve loved this job, and I appreciate the chance I was given 30 years ago,” Bull said. “It has been extremely rewarding. Having the opportunity to help the students is why I’ve stayed so long.”

The part of her job that has made her most proud, she said, is helping students: “I can’t go into a hospital or a doctor’s office in Mobile without seeing a former student, and they always seem to remember me and are very friendly.”

While Bull says she will miss her students and colleagues, she is eager to embark on the next chapter of her life and to spend more time with her family.

A retirement reception will be held in Bull’s honor on Thursday, Feb. 27 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the USA Faculty Club on campus.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:24 PM](#) No comments:

## Influenza 101: What students and staff need to know

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

USA Health wants to ensure staff and students who work or spend time within our facilities take all precautions necessary to prevent the spread of flu. Here are answers to some common questions about the flu, answered by Teresa M. Aikens, RN, MSN, CIC, nurse manager for Infection Prevention/Control and Employee Occupational Health at University Hospital.



Q. What should an employee or student who works at USA Health do when they are diagnosed with the flu?

A. It’s recommended that all employees and students with a confirmed flu diagnosis be treated with Tamiflu to shorten the duration of the illness and lessen the symptoms. Do not go to work or school if you are ill.

Q. Speaking of returning to work following the flu, when can employees and students come back to work?

A. Employees and students with the flu diagnosis must wait until they are free of fever for 24 hours (without any fever-reducing medication). Upon return to work, they must wear a mask for the first seven days because they can potentially shed the virus and infect others.

Q. Is wearing a mask for seven days after having the flu a new policy?

A. Yes. It was added in 2019 after recommendation and approval by the USA Health Infection Prevention and Review Committee.

Q. Where can employees and students get the masks?

A. Masks are available throughout the hospitals. If an employee has trouble locating a mask, contact Infection Prevention or their supervisor.

Q. Is wearing a mask only for employees and students who work directly with patients?

A. No, this applies to all employees because they could infect co-workers.

Q. Do these flu protocols apply to medical students or other students?

A. If they are in our facility, they need to be compliant with the policy as they could infect patients and hospital employees.

Q. Where can flu patients be treated quickly within USA Health?

A. As with any illness, they should contact their primary care physician or any urgent care facility during the first signs of illness for antiviral medications to be effective. If they are experiencing severe illness in need of hospitalization, such as patients with multiple medical problems or severe respiratory distress, then an emergency room visit may be indicated. Most individuals with the flu can be cared for at home, and the best advice for almost everyone is to stay at home away from people. Also, always try to cover your cough and use good hand hygiene.

Q. Is the vaccine still available for students?

A. Yes. The Student Health Center has flu vaccine available for all currently enrolled students. There is no need to make an appointment. The cost of the flu shot is typically covered by most insurance plans. Call 460-7151 for more information.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:04 PM](#) No comments:

## Save the Date: Town hall rescheduled for March 9



Faculty and staff are invited to a town hall meeting with leaders from the University of South Alabama and USA Health at 7:30 a.m. Monday, March 9 at the University Hospital Conference Center.