

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, April 17, 2020

Q & A with second-year student Devon Askins

Meet Devon Askins, 24, a second-year student at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine who has aspirations of becoming an ophthalmologist. She recently spoke about navigating her way through medical school, discussed her goals for the future, and offered advice to upcoming medical students.



Eyes on the Prize: Life in Medical School

Q: What inspired you to go to medical school?

D.A.: While in middle and high school, I realized math and science were the subjects I enjoyed and were strong in, and over time started to learn more about and love the medical field. Sometime around my junior year I made up my mind that I was going to be a doctor and nothing was going to stop me from there!

Q: What made you choose the University of South Alabama College of Medicine?

D.A.: My interest in the USA College of Medicine began after I met Mark Scott, the director of admissions. He represented the warmth and welcome I feel every day at the university. The other major reason I chose USA came from our high board scores – which is quite impressive.

Q: What kind specialty interests you?

D.A.: Since college, I've had a major interest in ophthalmology. My dad has a career in ophthalmic surgical sales and his connections with doctors across the Southeast definitely ignited that interest. I have spent most of my time shadowing this specialty, but I've also explored other career options such as dermatology or radiology.

Q: You're a second-year student. How is second year different than first year?

D.A.: Second year is more enjoyable than first year because of the material you are learning – it is significantly more organ systems based compared to first year. You also start the second year knowing what type of studying works for you, which makes it less stressful than first year. However, you are also dividing your time between studying and preparing to take the national board exam all students take at the end of second year. That is very difficult and you do find yourself working harder than ever before.

Q: How can a student deal with stress in medical school?

D.A.: One thing I always remind myself when I am overly stressed is – 'one bite at a time.' That's truly what helps me the most. I keep on chipping away at one thing on my to-do list instead of trying to focus on everything that I have to do or trying to do multiple projects at the same time. I also really prioritize my health.

Search This Blog

Got news to share?

Feel free to email your ideas to
lalyle@health.southalabama.edu

Blog Archive

- ▶ 2023 (11)
- ▶ 2022 (249)
- ▶ 2021 (269)
- ▼ 2020 (191)
 - ▶ 12/27 - 01/03 (1)
 - ▶ 12/13 - 12/20 (6)
 - ▶ 12/06 - 12/13 (2)
 - ▶ 11/29 - 12/06 (5)
 - ▶ 11/15 - 11/22 (3)
 - ▶ 11/08 - 11/15 (5)
 - ▶ 11/01 - 11/08 (5)
 - ▶ 10/25 - 11/01 (5)
 - ▶ 10/18 - 10/25 (6)
 - ▶ 10/11 - 10/18 (5)
 - ▶ 10/04 - 10/11 (3)
 - ▶ 09/27 - 10/04 (6)
 - ▶ 09/20 - 09/27 (3)
 - ▶ 09/13 - 09/20 (1)
 - ▶ 09/06 - 09/13 (4)
 - ▶ 08/30 - 09/06 (3)
 - ▶ 08/23 - 08/30 (5)
 - ▶ 08/16 - 08/23 (4)
 - ▶ 08/09 - 08/16 (3)
 - ▶ 08/02 - 08/09 (4)
 - ▶ 07/26 - 08/02 (6)
 - ▶ 07/19 - 07/26 (3)
 - ▶ 07/12 - 07/19 (2)
 - ▶ 07/05 - 07/12 (5)
 - ▶ 06/28 - 07/05 (2)
 - ▶ 06/21 - 06/28 (4)
 - ▶ 06/14 - 06/21 (3)
 - ▶ 06/07 - 06/14 (2)
 - ▶ 05/31 - 06/07 (3)

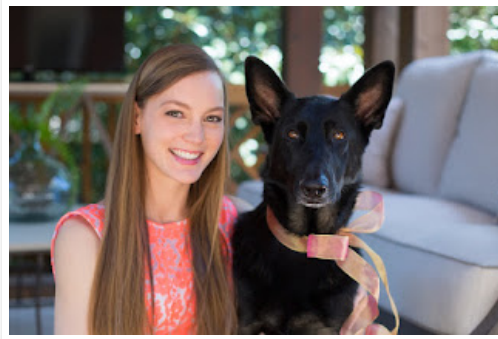
I sleep as much as possible, set time limits on my TV breaks (which also helps ensure I get extra sleep), eat well and continue my daily exercise.

Fun with Devon: Life Outside Medical School

Q: What do you like to do for fun when you're not studying?

D.A.: My favorite thing has to be exercising with my dog.

Back in college, I rescued a German Shepherd from a shelter in Montgomery. He has changed my life so much and one of the main ways he has done so is in how much I exercise. He gets me outside each day whether I want to or not and I believe this is a major factor behind my performance in medical school.



Q: Favorite food from the café at South Alabama?

D.A.: I really do not eat out often at all – I instead love to cook at home. But if I had to choose I would go with Chick-Fil-A. You can't ever go wrong there!

Q: What's your favorite social media channel and why?

D.A.: I would say Instagram. My mom is a photographer, so my sister and I grew up with an appreciation for pictures and the artistry behind photographers. Instagram is such a great place to see and share creativity, while keeping up with friends and family.

Q: Do you have any hidden talents?

D.A.: I do! Early on in high school is when I noticed I have a photographic memory. As I buckled down in school, I received higher scores on exams. I also began to notice that if I became stuck on a problem, I could mentally picture the text or page that would lead me to the correct answer. However, I do not use it as often as people would imagine. It is actually my last resort on a test.

Q: If you could offer some advice to students thinking about medical school, what would it be?

D.A.: To believe in yourself! When I taught the MCAT for Kaplan, I too often heard students say, 'I'll never remember that' or 'I'm not as smart as them.' Sure, you have to be smart to get into medical school, but a big part of medical school that can set you apart from others is how hard you work. Instead of doubting what you know, act on it! Although medical school is pretty tough, you don't want to miss this. It is truly amazing what we are learning and I can't imagine missing out on it.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [7:00 AM](#) No comments:

Thursday, April 16, 2020

COVID-19 moves National Public Health Week online for students



Members of the Public Health Interest Group at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine had planned several activities for National Public Health Week, April 6-12 – a lunch walk, panel discussion, a social, a service project and recycling challenge.

Then, COVID-19 cancelled in-person classes and events. "We decided to move everything online," said Jordan Smith, a third-year medical student who serves as vice president for the group. Jacob Williams and Libby Beddingfield, both first-

- ▶ 05/24 - 05/31 (4)
- ▶ 05/17 - 05/24 (2)
- ▶ 05/10 - 05/17 (5)
- ▶ 05/03 - 05/10 (3)
- ▶ 04/26 - 05/03 (3)
- ▶ 04/19 - 04/26 (2)
- ▼ 04/12 - 04/19 (5)

Q & A with second-year student Devon Askins

COVID-19 moves National Public Health Week online ...

USA College of Medicine researcher launches COVID-...

Wellness Wednesdays support doctoral students and ...

USA medical students seek PPE donations for health...

- ▶ 04/05 - 04/12 (4)
- ▶ 03/29 - 04/05 (3)
- ▶ 03/22 - 03/29 (3)
- ▶ 03/15 - 03/22 (3)
- ▶ 03/08 - 03/15 (2)
- ▶ 03/01 - 03/08 (6)
- ▶ 02/23 - 03/01 (6)
- ▶ 02/16 - 02/23 (4)
- ▶ 02/09 - 02/16 (3)
- ▶ 02/02 - 02/09 (5)
- ▶ 01/26 - 02/02 (4)
- ▶ 01/19 - 01/26 (5)
- ▶ 01/12 - 01/19 (6)
- ▶ 01/05 - 01/12 (4)

- ▶ 2019 (245)
- ▶ 2018 (236)
- ▶ 2017 (231)
- ▶ 2016 (206)
- ▶ 2015 (205)
- ▶ 2014 (241)
- ▶ 2013 (232)
- ▶ 2012 (245)
- ▶ 2011 (262)
- ▶ 2010 (247)
- ▶ 2009 (88)

year medical students, and Aaron Chinnners, a second-year medical student, were also on board with the idea.

The group turned to social media and Zoom to keep fellow students involved. The goal was the same. "For our organization, this week provides a way to connect and participate in national dialogue pertaining to the intersections of public health and medicine," Smith said. "The mission of our local group is to equip students to be aware of and involved in addressing the health needs of our community. As physicians, we will have important opportunities to advocate for all our patients' health needs, which often goes beyond just access to insurance and medications, but also to safe housing and education."

On Monday, which has a mental health theme, students were invited to tune in to social media to see featured students share about their hobbies. Tuesday focused on sharing articles and social media posts about the public health infrastructure and its role in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wednesday's planned panel discussion on violence prevention moved to a Zoom format that featured local experts. These included Linda Ding, M.D., assistant professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine; Ashley Williams, M.D., chief resident in USA's department of surgery; and Beth Huffmaster, a nurse practitioner at USA Health University Hospital, who has conducted research in post-traumatic stress disorder related to violence.

On Thursday, students were asked to share social media posts about their efforts to help the environment while also quarantining. Friday brought a billion steps challenge, with the winner receiving an Amazon gift card. In between, there were trivia questions on social media daily.

"We had students from a variety of classes participate, and for the Zoom panel, we had a participant from every single class," Smith said. "It's hard to find an activity that attracts every single class. That, to me, says a lot about the overall success and appeal for the content presented."

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:04 PM](#) No comments:

USA College of Medicine researcher launches COVID-19 data project



USA Health providers test patients for COVID-19 at Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

A public health researcher at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine is compiling data that could provide insights into COVID-19 symptoms, the spread of the infection, and its impact on Mobile-area residents.

Casey L. Daniel, Ph.D., M.P.H., assistant professor of family medicine at the USA College of Medicine, said the patient data being collected at USA Health clinics, hospitals and testing sites could provide critical information to policymakers and

others as they respond to the pandemic.

"The project has multiple objectives," Daniel said. "We want to inform health system coordination and policies in real time to ensure maximization of limited resources such as test kits, PPE and personnel."

When patients request COVID-19 testing, their answers to screening questions are logged into a database. The information, which is de-identified to protect confidentiality, covers symptoms, exposures, existing illnesses, travel, and demographic information. The research group includes USA Health staff and third-year medical students.



Casey Daniel, Ph.D., M.P.H.

"After they are tested, we add the results into the database along with any comorbidities such as diabetes, heart disease and autoimmune disorders that put patients at a higher risk," Daniel said. "This data will give us a better picture about COVID-19 trends in our area, such as what ages, races and communities have been the most affected and how these compare to state and national trends."

USA Health began testing employees and established patients in mid-March and partnered with the City of Mobile to open a testing site for the public on April 6 at Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

Daniel said that the project also aims to develop a protocol for following up with patients who test positive for COVID-19 to gauge length of symptoms and any recurrence or complications over time. "We don't know yet what the long-term outcomes will be," she said. "Gathering this information now will be essential as we learn more about COVID-19."

Daniel said she plans to develop both peer-reviewed articles for publication based on the data as well as community briefings to inform local residents about what COVID-19 looks like in our area.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [9:39 AM](#) No comments:

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Wellness Wednesdays support doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows

An initiative started before the novel coronavirus pandemic – Wellness Wednesdays – has proven to be beneficial for doctoral students in the Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program and postdoctoral fellows at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.



Angie O'Neal

Angie O'Neal, an academic advisor in the USA College of Medicine's Office of Research Education and Training, implemented Wellness Wednesdays in January. The weekly email covers wellness topics, provides resources, and keeps the cohort of students connected and engaged with check-ins and virtual volunteer opportunities.

"My job is to support students and postdocs from the day they start in our program or college until the day they move on," O'Neal said. "I didn't believe that I could do that without considering their overall wellness."

For the most part, first- and second-year graduate students are participating in online learning, although some are considered essential workers based on their roles in the lab or ongoing experiments.

"Scientists in general have to be resilient," O'Neal said. "A major part of research is failing and trying another approach. Our BMS students have adapted to the new learning environment and are making necessary adjustments."

The concept for Wellness Wednesdays stemmed from a webcast O'Neal attended in November through the Society for Neuroscience titled "Supporting Emotional Well-Being in Trainees." One of the presenters, Sharon Milgram, Ph.D., from the National Institutes of Health, discussed how she had started a wellness initiative at the NIH for their students and postdoctoral fellows. O'Neal reached out to Milgram to learn more about how she could implement some of the ideas at the USA College of Medicine.

With support from Thomas Rich, Ph.D., professor of pharmacology, and Mark Taylor, Ph.D., associate professor of physiology and cell biology, co-directors of the Office of Research Education and Training, O'Neal moved forward with her concept. They formed a wellness advisory committee, with representation from the six basic medical sciences tracks and a postdoctoral representative, that helps inform the topics for Wellness Wednesdays and plan wellness events.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:09 PM](#) No comments:

USA medical students seek PPE donations for health workers



Amanda Atkins, left, and Macy Vickers, third-year students at the USA College of Medicine, are collections donations of PPE for USA Health frontline workers.

Two third-year medical students at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine are joining in the effort to ensure that the healthcare heroes at USA Health are fully supported in the fight against COVID-19. For their part, the students are accepting donations of personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline workers at USA.

The idea to get students involved came when Macy Vickers and Amanda Atkins learned that friends at another medical school had started a medical supply drive to collect PPE for medical providers. After talking with leadership at USA Health to get a list of items that would be particularly useful, the students quickly recruited other USA medical students to volunteer and began contacting local business around Mobile for donations.

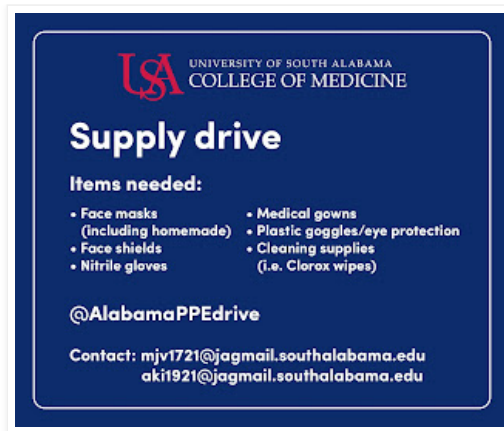
"We are asking the businesses to donate anything they may have to help protect our healthcare workers, such as masks, nitrile gloves, face shields and medical gowns," Vickers said. "There are a variety of businesses who are not operating right now and have extra supplies. People have already been so generous!"

According to Vickers, her motivation to help was partially out of gratitude to the physicians, nurses, and staff at USA Health who have taught her so much in her time as a medical student. Vickers, who is from Mobile and will be applying for an OB-GYN residency in the fall, said, "It has been so meaningful to have something to do to help those who are in the field that I will soon join."

"I wanted to get involved because I saw what a huge need there was for medical supplies during this pandemic," said Atkins, who is from Birmingham and will be applying for an otolaryngology residency. "I am so excited to have a tangible way to help keep our healthcare workers safe. Our faculty and staff are incredibly brave, and I'm so thankful for everything they're doing to fight this pandemic."

Vickers' and Atkins' efforts dovetail with similar outreach endeavors around USA Health. USA Health's Pandemic Emergency Fund supports USA Health and its critical needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. South CARES Student Emergency Fund directs critical resources to students who find themselves with urgent expenses they are unprepared to meet. You can donate to both at southalabama.edu/usaresponds.

To contribute PPE to the supply drive, contact mjv1721@jagmail.southalabama.edu or aki1921@jagmail.southalabama.edu.



Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:51 AM](#) No comments:

Simple theme. Powered by Blogger.