

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, April 30, 2020

Daniel to receive alumni award from UAB Public Health

A public health researcher at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine has been selected to receive the 2020 UAB School of Public Health Early Career Achievement Alumni Award.



Casey L. Daniel, Ph.D., M.P.H., was chosen for the award for demonstrating excellence in public health as an alumna of the UAB School of Public Health. She is an assistant professor of family medicine at the USA College of Medicine and works in the cancer control and prevention program at USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute.

"Dr. Daniel is an excellent collaborator and excels in community engagement," said Paul Erwin, M.D., dean of the UAB School of Public Health. "She exemplifies all the attributes of our graduates by 'Being Somebody' and 'Making a Difference.'"

In her role at MCI, Daniel conducts epidemiological and intervention research and mentors undergraduates, graduate students and medical students. Her research focuses on the prevention of human papillomavirus-associated cancers, particularly improving adolescent HPV vaccination in rural and underserved populations. She has led initiatives that engage partners in pharmacy, dentistry, oncology, education and policy.

Daniel is the elected chair of the Alabama Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition and appointed lead of the Data Work Group for the Alabama Adolescent Vaccination Task Force. She was selected as a 2019-2020 American Cancer Society ResearchHERs ambassador and serves on the ACS Alabama South Region Board of Directors. Daniel was recently named chairman of the board of directors for the organization VAX2STOP, a nonprofit working to reduce cancer risk in the Alabama through preventive care and education.

She is currently leading a project at USA Health compiling data that could provide insights into COVID-19 symptoms, the spread of the infection and its impact on Mobile-area residents, as well as serving on numerous COVID-19 tasks forces at USA and in the community.

Daniel's research is funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama, the Health Resources & Services Administration, the Alabama Department of Public Health and other organizations. She has authored numerous scientific articles and is a frequent presenter at national and international meetings.

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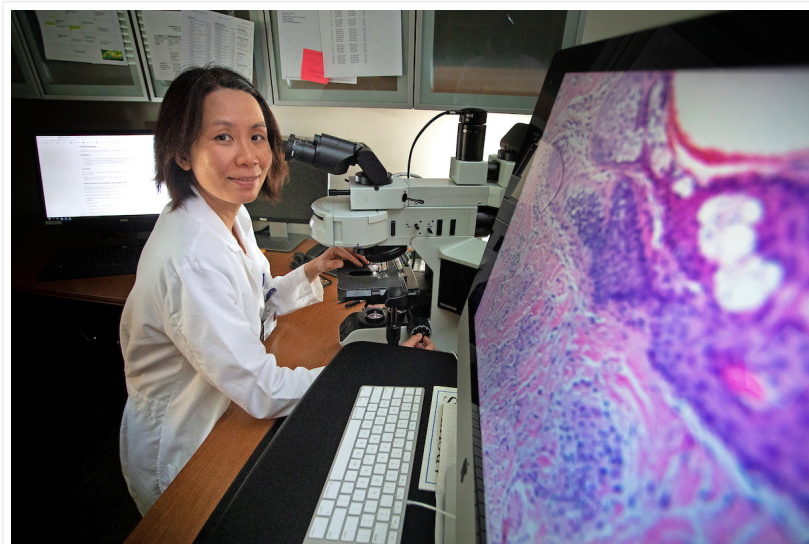
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Phung, physician-scientist, joins pathology faculty at USA College of Medicine



Pathology allows Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D., to combine both of her passions: medicine and research.

The physician-scientist recently joined the University of South Alabama College of Medicine as an associate professor of pathology. She also serves as medical director of molecular pathology and dermatopathology at USA Health.

"I want to apply our knowledge and understanding of disease pathogenesis and laboratory diagnostics to patient care, and pathology fulfills that critical niche in medicine," Phung said. "In today's healthcare, molecular and genomic testing has increasingly important role in providing clinicians key information for the diagnosis and treatment of patients with infectious diseases and cancer, to name a few."

Phung's research area is the tumor microenvironment, which is the milieu in which cancer cells grow. This milieu consists of blood vessels, lymphatics, immune cells and the extracellular matrix, she said.

"Tumor cells and the surrounding microenvironment interact with each other, and this interaction plays a crucial role in tumor progression and metastasis," she explained. "My particular research focuses on the molecular mechanisms that drive tumor cells to induce new blood vessel formation to feed their growth and distant spread."

Her research also focuses on abnormal vascular growth and development in children, which give rise to a class of disorders called vascular anomalies. She said, "We have recently uncovered potential novel mechanisms of how these lesions develop by concurrently examining the entire cellular genome and protein repertoire in the cell."

Phung said she is excited to be part of the USA College of Medicine and the Mobile community. "I chose to come to USA because I saw a great opportunity for professional growth and development at the university in general and in the department of pathology in particular," she said. "I look forward to developing meaningful relationships with the USA community, and to a time when I can freely explore the charm of Mobile and its surrounding coastal areas."

Prior to joining USA, Phung was an associate professor in the department of pathology and immunology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. She also served as a molecular pathologist, a dermatopathologist, and as the associate director of global pathology at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

While a junior faculty member at Baylor, Phung teamed up with a group of physicians at Harvard Medical School and the University of Medicine and

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Feelings are neither good nor bad - they just are

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Pharmacy in Vietnam to establish a highly successful medical clinic to care for children with disfiguring vascular birthmarks in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

"This work has given me much confidence that an individual, with the right purpose and motivation as well as strong support from one's institutional leadership and colleagues, can make a huge impact for the good of others," she said.

Phung earned her medical degree and Ph.D. in cell biology from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in Rochester, New York. She completed her residency training in anatomic pathology at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Washington University, in St. Louis.

Phung completed a clinical fellowship in dermatopathology, followed by a postdoctoral research fellowship in vascular biology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston. She later completed a clinical fellowship in molecular genetic pathology at Houston Methodist Hospital in Houston.

She is a board-certified diplomate of the American Board of Pathology, the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics, and the American Board of Dermatology.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [8:59AM](#) No comments:

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

Feelings are neither good nor bad - they just are

Marjorie Scaffa, Ph.D., health and wellness counselor at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, discusses ways that medical students and others can deal with their emotions.



Marjorie Scaffa, Ph.D.

This pandemic has left many of us dealing with a multitude of emotions we may have never experienced before. We may have no idea what to do with them, or even what they are. As medical students, I am guessing that most of you are worried – worried about what your academic journey is going to look like moving forward, worried about when you will get to see patients again, worried about what your Step score will be now that you're stuck in a "holding pattern" waiting for testing centers to open, worried about where your letters of recommendation will come from, worried that you'll lose your skills/knowledge, worried about what this means for you.

And then maybe you feel guilty for feeling this way. You might feel awful for considering your feelings in a time when the whole world is going through the worst health crisis we've experienced in over 100 years. You may start to question if you are cut out to be a doctor because you're thinking about yourself and your educational journey. Or maybe you're feeling super frustrated with being sidelined right now. You don't understand why you can't get in the "game" and help out. You feel ready, you feel healthy and capable of doing something to lend a hand. As a result, you may be feeling helpless. Isolated. Confused. You are not alone.

Guess what? **It's okay not to be okay.** It is important to understand that in this time, grief is a normal and acceptable reaction.

At times like this, it is easy to focus on negative outcomes, and we can easily get overwhelmed with the "what ifs" and the worst-case scenarios. This causes our primitive brains to feel unsafe and clouds our judgment and emotions. So what do you do? How do you deal with all of this?

First, it is important to feel the emotions. Recognize them. Give them their time

and space. Emotions must move. When they do not “move” they get “stuck” and lead to negative outcomes – depression, unhealthy levels of anxiety, and other mental health disorders. **Experience your emotions.**

Then focus on the present – not when on-campus classes or clerkships will start again, not Sept. 15, not beyond that. **Focus on the present** – the day you are in. Take a deep breath. Feel the air come into your lungs. Name five things you see right now. Name four things you can feel. Name a sound you hear. Focus on the now. Then recognize that you have the ability to accept your emotions and manage them.

And while you’re at it, **turn your focus to what you can control.** That might be making a nice lunch or volunteering for a hotline. Or it might be turning off the computer/putting down your cell phone because you just don’t feel like seeing what Karen is up to with all of her amazing free time and her ceaseless energy while in quarantine. And for goodness sake, do NOT feel bad about giving yourself some time to process your emotions (or for not being like Karen. Sometimes you do NOT have to be the most productive person in the world, even if you are holed up in your apartment all day, every day). You may be tempted to say to yourself, “I should not be feeling bad right now; there are so many others who have it way worse than me.” Instead, say to yourself, “I am going to give myself 20 minutes to feel this sadness” and then move on.

One strategy to identify, experience, and manage emotions effectively is **expressive writing or journaling.** Research has shown that expressive writing improves both physical and mental health. Many of you may already have a history of journaling, while others may have never tried it. Expressive writing is easy. You just write about something that is bothering you. Writing for as little as 5 to 10 minutes can dramatically change the way you are thinking and feeling.

If you struggle to get started, here are some writing prompts that may help.

- How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting you and the people around you?
- How is it related to other significant experiences in your life?
- How are you dealing with feelings such as anxiety and loneliness?
- How are your social world and friendships changing due to COVID-19?
- How are you handling the changes in physical and social distance?
- How are you handling the disruptions to your medical education?
- Recognizing that many of the changes caused by COVID-19 pandemic are out of your control, what aspects of your life do you have control over and how can you maximize your control in these areas?
- How has this pandemic affected your thoughts and feelings about becoming a physician and healthcare in general?
- How might you take advantage of this time to reflect on your relationships, purpose in life, spirituality, goals, values, etc.?

For more information on expressive writing during the pandemic, go to <http://exw.utpsyc.org/#tests>.

Let me know how I can help. I am currently providing virtual counseling online in 15-, 30- or 60-minute time blocks. Call (251) 460-7051 or email mscaffa@southalabama.edu to make an appointment.

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