

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, July 31, 2020

Pathologist's research aims to advance immune-based therapies for treatment of tumors

Pallavi Patil, M.D., was in her first year of medical school when a micrograph of cells captured her attention. The image, taken with a scanning electron microscope, generated her interest in studying the pathophysiology of disease.



"Pathology is the last stop in the diagnostic workup, as pathology reports determine patient treatment," said Patil, who recently joined the University of South Alabama College of Medicine as an assistant professor of pathology. "Pathology provides ample opportunities to pursue translational research. I chose pathology because it is a unique specialty serving as a bridge between the basic sciences and clinical medicine, where you can do both."

As a pathologist with USA Health, Patil is motivated to help patients by providing timely and accurate diagnoses. Most recently, she served as a clinical fellow in gastrointestinal and liver pathology at Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn.

Patil's research primarily focuses on the study of immune microenvironment of tumors for advances in immune-based therapies. This research encompasses tumors of the stomach, gallbladder, esophagus, endometrium and prostate. Her other research includes the study of prognostic and predictive factors in tumors including prostate, thyroid, lung, breast, soft tissue, ovary, kidney, endometrium, liver and bile duct tumors.

Born in India, Patil earned her medical degree at Seth Gordhandas Sunderdas Medical College and King Edward Memorial Hospital in Mumbai. She completed a residency in pathology at the Topiwala National Medical College and BYL Nair Hospital in Mumbai, before moving to the United States for further training.

"Books for medical education and evidence-based guidelines emerging from western medicine inspired me to pursue training in the United States," Patil said.

She completed a research fellowship in anatomic pathology at Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, followed by residency training in anatomic and clinical pathology at Brown University in Providence, R.I.

The College of American Pathologists recognized Patil as the 2018 CAP Resident of the Year for her outstanding contributions to the specialties of pathology and laboratory medicine. In recognition of her contributions to mentoring and

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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)

Pathologist's research aims to
advance immune-base...

USA College of Medicine launches
Primary Care Path...

College of Medicine, USA Health
implement Justice ...

Bauer named member of NIH
Research Study Section

M1s get first taste of medical school
during COVID-19

research, Patil was named to the American Society for Clinical Pathology's 40 Under Forty in 2018. That same year, she was recognized as an ASCP Choosing Wisely Champion for promoting effective test utilization.

Patil is board certified by the American Board of Pathology.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:56 AM](#) No comments:

USA College of Medicine launches Primary Care Pathway Program



Allen Perkins, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of family medicine, serves as principal investigator for the Primary Care Pathway Program.

With the goal of improving healthcare for underserved populations, the University of South Alabama College of Medicine is launching a new educational track that will provide specialized training in primary care at local community health centers.

The Primary Care Pathway Program, funded by a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) totaling more than \$6 million, will enroll up to 10 medical students per class for four years for specialized training. The USA College of Medicine was one of five institutions in the U.S. to receive grant funding from HRSA for the program.

"The program allows these medical students to focus their attention on primary care," Allen Perkins, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of family medicine, who serves as the principal investigator for the project. "For the community, it's huge. The program allows the USA College of Medicine to partner in the care of the underserved beyond the hospital at the community level."

The goal is to increase the number of primary care physicians in underserved areas and ultimately improve the health of those populations, Perkins said. "Following residency, the hope is for these students to focus on primary care and practice in a setting where they care for the underserved," he said.

The USA College of Medicine has a long track record of graduating physicians who practice in the state. More than 43 percent of the college's alumni practice in Alabama, with 36 percent in underserved areas, 27 percent in primary care disciplines and 10 percent in rural areas.

Students will be chosen for the Primary Care Pathway Program based on an interest in primary care and a willingness to commit to the practice following residency training. Community partners, meanwhile, become fellows who are trained by USA College of Medicine faculty to teach and mentor medical students. The community partners include Franklin Medical Mall, Franklin Foley Family Health Center, Franklin Loxley Family Health Center, Semmes Family Health Center and Accordia Health in Bayou La Batre.

USA Medical Alumni Association to host virtual CME...

- ▶ 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)
- ▶ 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)
- ▶ 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)

Under the program, students spend 20 days in a community-based primary care clinic during their first two years and complete a summer quality improvement project. During their third year, students are assigned to primary care clerkships in family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics. They participate in a four-week elective at a community site and an acting internship in a primary care field.

Fourth-year students engage in a four-week primary care capstone practice management/leadership project and a four-week elective in basic science related to primary care. When they graduate, the students receive a special Primary Care Pathway notation on their diplomas.

Perkins said the Primary Care Pathway Program will also inform primary care training across the board at the USA College of Medicine. "For the broader student body, we will have faculty members who will be trained in population health and social determinants of health," he said. "The instruction will be infused into the entire curriculum for all students."

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:24 AM](#) No comments:

Thursday, July 30, 2020

College of Medicine, USA Health implement Justice Initiative to fight racism in medicine



The USA College of Medicine's Justice Initiative is built on the framework developed by White Coats for Black Lives, a national student-led organization working to dismantle racism in medicine.

In response to the ongoing unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis that continues to resonate throughout the world, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine has been tasked with identifying and addressing areas for improvement in the culture and climate of both USA Health and the USA College of Medicine.

"Our nation had a really intense couple of weeks," said Franklin Trimm, M.D., associate dean for diversity and inclusion at the USA College of Medicine and assistant vice president for medical affairs at USA Health. "We are going to take this momentum and turn it in to something that is long term by supporting meaningful conversations and developing very specific goals with measurable outcomes."

The first phase of the USA College of Medicine's response is the development of the Justice Initiative. The initiative is built on the framework developed by White Coats for Black Lives – a national, underrepresented minority medical student-run organization working to dismantle racism in medicine and promote the health, well-being and self-determination of people of color. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion has identified 14 areas of focus that are significant in addressing injustice within the context of training future physicians and

scientists. The assessment is in the form of a report card, with description of A, B and C level performance on each metric.

"These areas address both the academic and clinical learning environments," Trimm said. "For each area of focus, there is at least one metric that can be used to assess current status and guide action plans for improvement."

The 14 areas of focus are:

1. Underrepresented minority student representation
2. Underrepresented minority faculty representation
3. Underrepresented minority recognition
4. Underrepresented minority recruitment
5. Anti-racist training and curriculum
6. Discrimination reporting
7. Underrepresented minority grade disparity
8. Underrepresented minority support/resources
9. Campus policing
10. Marginalized patient population
11. Equal access for all patients
12. Immigrant patient protection
13. Staff compensation and insurance
14. Anti-racist IRB policies

According to Trimm, the experience of other medical schools and health systems who have incorporated this framework shows that a number of the metrics are aspirational, meaning goals that will take time and work to achieve. "By incorporating aspirational goals, we will be able to continue the conversations about equity and justice, in contrast to only setting a few goals that might be attained in a short period of time," he said.

The areas of improvement will become part of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes of the USA College of Medicine and the metrics will be assessed through the perspectives of four groups: USA COM medical and graduate students, residents and fellows in the graduate medical education programs, the College of Medicine faculty and staff, and health system employees.

The metrics, which have been developed into a pending survey, will be distributed to USA medical and graduate students and COM faculty and staff via email in early August. Residents and fellows at USA Health will follow. Additional areas of focus for USA Health are being developed.

"The next step is to issue a call for student volunteers," Trimm said. "The volunteer groups need to be a diverse representation of graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and all four years of medical students. These students will be responsible for reviewing the data collected by the survey and making recommendations on how to move forward."

Once the recommendations are prioritized, they will become part of the CQI plan for the College of Medicine and will be tracked by our CQI committee to make sure the conversation continues.

"We must move forward so that everyone within our medical school and health system feels he or she can be themselves and bring their unique perspective to the table," Trimm said. "The process is difficult, and change takes time. It involves us having tough conversations and, in many cases, it requires us to change in some fashion. We implore each of you to keep talking. Keep asking questions and speaking up. The sharing of information and experiences is an important way to continue to learn and create a future that is better than our past."

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Bauer named member of NIH Research Study Section



Natalie Bauer, Ph.D., associate professor of pharmacology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, recently was selected to join the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Respiratory Integrative Biology and Translational Research Study Section – a prestigious and unique opportunity allowing her to contribute to the biomedical research effort on a national level.

"This appointment reflects positively on Natalie's outstanding reputation in the scientific community," said Mark Gillespie, Ph.D., SAMSF-Locke professor and chair of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine. "As a standing member of the study section, she will be part of the group that reviews nearly all grants focusing on pathophysiologic and translational aspects of disorders directly or indirectly impacting the pulmonary circulation. In her role, Natalie will have a nationwide influence on the course of this important area of research."

Bauer said this recognition speaks to the caliber of faculty at the USA College of Medicine. "The work we are doing here is held in high regard on both a national and international level," she said. "It reflects that what we are doing is impactful and recognizes the value of our contributions to a greater field of science."

Members of the study section are selected on the basis of their demonstrated competence and achievement in their scientific discipline as evidenced by the quality of research accomplishments, publications in scientific journals, and other significant scientific activities, achievements and honors.

Bauer's primary research interests are extracellular vesicles, also known as exosomes, and pulmonary arterial hypertension.

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M1s get first taste of medical school during COVID-19

First-year medical student TiAriel Anderson took a seat at a table in the Small Group Learning Center, which was rearranged to allow for social distancing due to COVID-19. Through a mask, she reacted to her first day of orientation at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

"I feel a little bit of nerves, but I feel prepared," said Anderson, of Monroeville. "I'm not going to doubt myself."

Her classmate, Tiara Dean, put it another way: "We're making history," she said, referring to the new world of medical education during COVID-19.

On Monday, Anderson and Dean were in the first group of M1s to attend an in-person orientation talk on unconscious bias, get photos taken and tour the medical school. Most of the week's orientation sessions and ice-breaker activities for the 74-member class were moved online to allow for social distancing.



A group of first-year medical students takes a tour of campus during M1 orientation.



Franklin Trimm, M.D., associate dean for diversity and inclusion at the USA College of Medicine, greets first-year medical student Trentyn Shaw.

T.J. Hundley, M.D., associate dean for medical education, said the curriculum will remain the same though the delivery method will be different this year. First- and second-year students are being divided into three groups and will take turns attending lectures online and in-person at the medical school.

"The faculty will be making sure to deliver content in a focused way," said Jeffrey

Sosnowski, M.D., Ph.D., assistant dean for curriculum integration. "We have to make sure we keep the students engaged."

[View more photos from orientation on Flickr.](#)

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Tuesday, July 28, 2020

USA Medical Alumni Association to host virtual CME courses

The University of South Alabama Medical Alumni Association is hosting three upcoming opportunities for continuing medical education.

"Following the University's decision not to hold in-person events until spring 2021, the USA Medical Alumni Association has identified digital avenues to connect with our graduates," said Ann Eleece Kouns, associate director of medical alumni relations at the USA College of Medicine. "These



presentations allow us to offer CME credits while showcasing the myriad of resources and programs the USA College of Medicine and USA Health have to offer. We look forward to welcoming our friends and family across the College of Medicine, USA Health and the local community to these presentations."

The first course, "The Evolution and Expansion of COVID Testing at USA Health," is set for Wednesday, Aug. 19, from 6 to 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Presenters are Michael Chang, M.D., chief medical officer and associate vice president of medical affairs at USA Health; Natalie Fox, DNP, chief nursing officer and assistant administrator at USA Health; Benjamin Estrada, M.D., professor and vice chair of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a pediatric infectious disease specialist at USA Health; and Mike Zang, director of perioperative services at USA Health.

Register by Aug. 10 at <https://medicalalumni.southalabama.edu/pages/evolution-and-expansion-of-covid-testing>.

Mark your calendar for other courses in the series:

"Why Diversity Matters in Healthcare"

Franklin Trimm, M.D., Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion and Assistant Vice President for Medical Affairs

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020 6 to 7 p.m.

<https://medicalalumni.southalabama.edu/pages/why-diversity-matters-in-healthcare>

"Social Determinants of Health: A Focus on Poverty"

Errol Crook, M.D., Professor and Abraham Mitchell Chair of Internal Medicine

Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021 6 to 7 p.m.

<https://medicalalumni.southalabama.edu/pages/social-determinants-of-health>

The presentations are free, but registration is required to attend. Each course is approved for one credit hour/unit of continuing education.

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