

Med School Watercooler

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

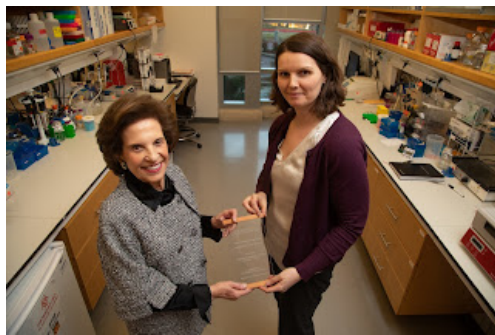
Thursday, October 29, 2020

Mayer Mitchell Award to be presented to cancer researcher

The recipient of the 2020 Mayer Mitchell Award for Excellence in Cancer Research will be announced on Nov. 5, at 4 p.m. via Zoom.

The \$10,000 award is presented annually to a promising scientist at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute upon the recommendation of a faculty committee. The award was established in 2009 by University of South Alabama Trustee Arlene Mitchell in memory of her late husband, Mayer Mitchell, a Mobile businessman, longtime USA trustee and formative figure in the establishment of MCI.

The 2019 recipient of the award was Natalie R. Gassman, Ph.D., an assistant professor of physiology and cell biology at the USA College of Medicine and a cancer researcher at the MCI.



In 2019, cancer researcher Natalie R. Gassman, Ph.D., right, was awarded the Mayer Mitchell Award for Excellence in Cancer Research by Mrs. Arlene Mitchell, left.

Med School Café to address lung cancer

Brian Persing, M.D., assistant professor of interdisciplinary clinical oncology and a medical oncologist with the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute, will present "Advances in Lung Cancer Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment" on Thursday, Nov. 12, at 11 a.m. The event will be held virtually via Zoom.

Persing will discuss the most recent guidelines for lung cancer screening as well as the use of robotic bronchoscopy, now available at USA Health, for immediate lung cancer diagnosis. Persing also will talk about treatments for lung cancer, including advances in immunotherapy that have significantly improved the outlook for patients.

To register for the lecture, visit <https://usahealthsystem.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJctcu6oqjsuG9DCa1a14NkQhOSBOyjVHNhe>.

Med School Café is a free community lecture series sponsored by USA Health. Each month, faculty and physicians share their expertise on a specific medical condition, providing insight on the latest treatments available.

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MacRae retires after 30 years of service



David MacRae, M.D., a Crampton Endowment of Geriatrics Scholar in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, recently retired after more than 30 years of service.

MacRae, who is in private practice, has served as a longtime advocate for the care of geriatric patients in our region. "His involvement in our academic programs is a beautiful example of community partnerships supporting our medical educational efforts," said Errol Crook, M.D., professor and Abraham Mitchell Chair of Internal Medicine at the

USA College of Medicine.

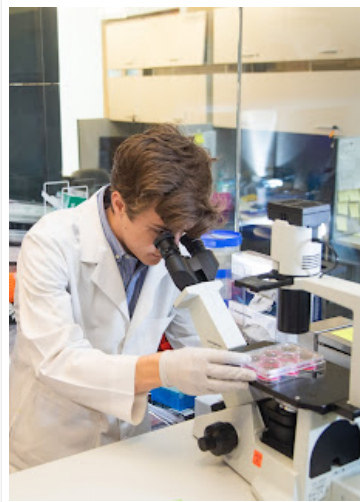
A 1983 graduate of the USA College of Medicine, MacRae is widely known for his educational efforts in the care of geriatric patients, and for his passion for providing education experiences in geriatric care for USA's medical students and resident physicians training at USA Health.

According to Judy Blair-Elortegui, M.D., program director for the internal medicine residency program, MacRae served as the primary clinical preceptor for residents on the geriatric medicine rotation. "There are incredibly few geriatric physicians in our area, and we were very grateful to had have Dr. MacRae serve as a mentor and educate our residents in this important area of medicine," she said. "His contributions to medical education speak directly to the mission of USA Health. By helping our residents learn the concepts unique to geriatric medicine, they are now able to help their senior patients lead longer, better lives."

In addition to earning his medical degree from the USA College of Medicine, MacRae also completed his residency training in internal medicine at USA Health in 1986. After completing his residency training, he served as assistant professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine for two years before going in to private practice in Mobile.

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USA researchers published in DNA Repair journal



Graduate student Griffin Wright conducts research in the lab at the Mitchell Cancer Institute.

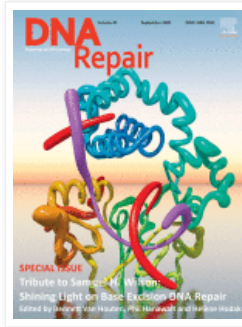
Griffin Wright, a student in the University of South Alabama basic medical sciences graduate program, and Natalie Gassman, Ph.D., assistant professor of physiology and cell biology at the USA College of Medicine and a cancer researcher at USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute, recently published an article in DNA Repair.

The article, titled "Transcriptional dysregulation of base excision repair proteins in breast cancer," is a graphical review of the mechanisms of transcriptional regulation, which refers to the means by which a cell regulates the conversion of DNA to RNA. Because graphical reviews are limited in text, Wright developed unique visual representations of how base excision repair (BER) proteins are regulated under normal cell conditions and in the context of cancer.

"Notably, Griffin's work highlights the asymmetry in our knowledge of how specific BER proteins, which are overexpressed in breast and other cancers, are regulated," explained Gassman, who is also a member of the USA Center for Lung Biology.

The review emphasizes that by understanding the transcriptional regulation of these proteins in breast cancers, particularly triple negative breast cancer, researchers may identify new molecular targets to improve therapeutic outcomes, Gassman said.

The article was part of a special issue of the journal to honor Samuel H. Wilson, M.D., a pioneer in understanding the structure-function relationships of BER proteins. Wilson served as Gassman's mentor during her postdoctoral research at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.



"It was a very rewarding and unique experience authoring a graphical review as a graduate student," Wright said. "I was very humbled to be a part of a tribute to Dr. Wilson, whose impact on the field of BER is incomparable. As a young scientist, I strive to emulate Dr. Wilson in my own work, and I am thankful for his contributions to the scientific community."

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

New citizen to become first physician in her family

As a sophomore at Murphy High School, Azeline Arcenal had the chance to shadow healthcare workers in the Summer Scrubs program organized by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. She spent the first day in a cardiac catheterization lab, where she watched a cardiologist insert a stent into a patient's artery to treat a blockage.

It was a paradigm shift for Arcenal. "I never realized all the different kinds of things that doctors do," she said. "That stood out for me."

By her freshman year at the University of South Alabama, Arcenal was certain that she wanted to become a physician – the first in her family. Today, she is in her second year at the USA College of Medicine, a school she chose in part because of the smaller class size.

"Knowing that I will be the first doctor in my family makes me strive to be the kind of physician that patients can trust and depend on," she said. "One day, I



Second-year-medical student Azeline Arcenal poses for a photo with her parents, Joseph and Maria Arcenal.

hope to be at a point where patients are at ease with me and feel confident in my ability to treat them.”

Born in Manila, the Philippines, Arcenal moved with her family to Mobile at age 5 when her father took a position in the aerospace industry. The family immediately began the naturalization process to become citizens, an undertaking that took her 16 years. As it happened, Arcenal found herself preparing for the Naturalization Test while also studying for the MCAT.

“Since I grew up here, the Naturalization Test wasn’t too difficult,” she said. “Most of the questions were pretty simple, though I had to brush up on the names of senators and representatives.”

In 2018, a month after her mother and sisters became citizens, Arcenal and her father raised their right hands and took the Oath of Allegiance with about 30 others in a ceremony in Montgomery.

For the oath, the group stood and turned to face friends and families for photos and videos. “When I started reciting the oath, I could feel tears welling up in my eyes,” she said.

Tears turned to elation when Arcenal stepped forward to receive her certificate of naturalization. “I finally was able to achieve a dream that took 16 years of waiting,” she said.

Her new citizenship status allowed her to apply for a U.S. passport and register to vote. “I remember feeling jealous that my friends were able to vote, and I could not,” she said. “I feel pretty excited about voting in my first presidential election.”

Arcenal said she is also looking forward to her clerkship rotations during her third and fourth years of medical school. “What I like the most about medical school is that we are able to go to clinics early on during the M1 and M2 years, and interact with actual patients, and it’s rewarding to be able to tie in what we learned during class and apply it to our experiences in the clinics,” she said.

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