

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, January 8, 2021

Medical student named to Mobile Equity Task Force



Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson congratulates fourth-year medical student Ravi Rajendra.

Ravi Rajendra, a fourth-year medical student at the USA College of Medicine, has been named to the City of Mobile's first Equity Task Force, where he is part of a work group identifying healthcare inequities in the community, especially those related to race.

"I enjoy projects in which I can help build a better community," said Rajendra, who plans to begin a residency in orthopedic surgery next fall. "As an orthopedic surgeon, I will one day work with patients to help them individually build healthier lives, but projects like the Equity Task Force allow for me to apply this same approach on a larger scale."

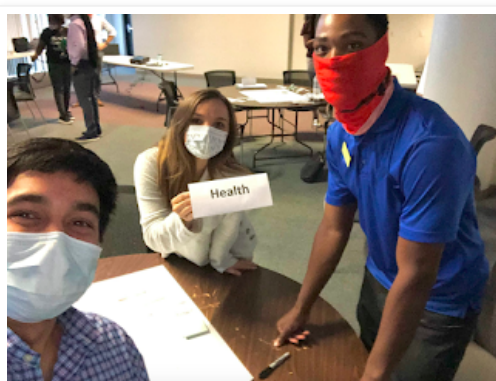
The Equity Task Force is comprised of community residents of diverse backgrounds who will use design thinking to identify problems and solutions. Design thinking is a popular problem-solving approach that seeks to understand people's needs and come up with innovative ways to meet those needs.

Rajendra, a Montgomery native, graduated with a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of South Alabama, where he served as student body president. During that time, he also was an intern for the Mayor's Millennial Challenge, where he helped to establish a local job training program for youth.

"Since 2016, Ravi has been an advocate for a better Mobile," said Anitra Belle Henderson, executive director of communications and external affairs for the City of Mobile. "We knew his passion for service and his strategic thinking would be needed on the Equity Task Force."

After holding workshops, the healthcare work group already has identified two areas of healthcare inequities to address: health literacy and food insecurity, Rajendra said.

Health literacy refers to the degree to which someone can obtain, process and understand basic health information to make informed healthcare decisions. "For



Ravi Rajendra, left, collaborates with members of Mobile's Equity Task Force.

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)
 - 12/12 - 12/19 (7)
 - 12/05 - 12/12 (6)
 - 11/28 - 12/05 (6)
 - 11/14 - 11/21 (4)
 - 11/07 - 11/14 (4)
 - 10/31 - 11/07 (10)
 - 10/24 - 10/31 (7)
 - 10/17 - 10/24 (5)
 - 10/10 - 10/17 (6)
 - 10/03 - 10/10 (8)
 - 09/26 - 10/03 (4)
 - 09/19 - 09/26 (4)
 - 09/12 - 09/19 (6)
 - 09/05 - 09/12 (7)
 - 08/29 - 09/05 (3)
 - 08/22 - 08/29 (7)
 - 08/15 - 08/22 (6)
 - 08/08 - 08/15 (4)
 - 08/01 - 08/08 (8)
 - 07/25 - 08/01 (6)
 - 07/18 - 07/25 (4)
 - 07/11 - 07/18 (4)
 - 07/04 - 07/11 (5)
 - 06/27 - 07/04 (6)
 - 06/20 - 06/27 (7)
 - 06/13 - 06/20 (4)
 - 06/06 - 06/13 (6)
 - 05/30 - 06/06 (5)
 - 05/23 - 05/30 (6)
 - 05/16 - 05/23 (4)

instance, I've seen patients here in Mobile with diabetes or high blood pressure who believe certain complications related to their illnesses are inevitable," he said. "But by providing education, we can build trust in the community and often reduce complications related to those diseases."

Food insecurity describes a family's inability to provide enough food for people in the household to live an active, healthy life. "We're looking at food deserts and the ability of citizens to acquire healthy food," Rajendra said. "We're looking to see whether the cause of food deserts is related to zoning or if the city can provide incentives to attract businesses that offer healthy food options."

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [9:00 AM](#) No comments: 

Thursday, January 7, 2021

Townsley celebrates retirement with virtual reception



Mary Townsley, Ph.D., speaks at a reception held in honor of her retirement from the USA College of Medicine.

The USA College of Medicine celebrated the retirement of Mary Townsley, Ph.D., with a virtual reception on Dec. 18.

At the end of 2020, Townsley, senior associate dean for the college and professor of physiology and cell biology and internal medicine, ended a tenure that lasted more than three decades.

She joined the faculty at the USA College of Medicine in 1988, also completing postdoctoral training at USA from 1983 to 1986. A physiologist by training, Townsley served in a number of administrative roles, in addition to being a researcher, instructor and mentor.

[Read more](#) about Townsley's 32-year tenure at the USA College of Medicine.

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



Troy Stevens, Ph.D., professor and chair of physiology and cell biology, congratulates Townsley on her retirement.

► [05/09 - 05/16](#) (3)

► [05/02 - 05/09](#) (7)

► [04/25 - 05/02](#) (5)

► [04/18 - 04/25](#) (3)

► [04/11 - 04/18](#) (7)

► [04/04 - 04/11](#) (5)

► [03/28 - 04/04](#) (5)

► [03/21 - 03/28](#) (6)

► [03/14 - 03/21](#) (4)

► [03/07 - 03/14](#) (7)

► [02/28 - 03/07](#) (6)

► [02/21 - 02/28](#) (6)

► [02/14 - 02/21](#) (5)

► [02/07 - 02/14](#) (5)

► [01/31 - 02/07](#) (4)

► [01/24 - 01/31](#) (5)

► [01/17 - 01/24](#) (6)

► [01/10 - 01/17](#) (6)

▼ [01/03 - 01/10](#) (5)

[Medical student named to Mobile Equity Task Force](#)

[Townsley celebrates retirement with virtual reception](#)

[Med School Café to address cervical cancer](#)

[Annual COM Research Forum winners announced](#)

[USA College of Medicine represented in Mobile Bay'...](#)

► [2020](#) (191)

► [2019](#) (245)

► [2018](#) (236)

► [2017](#) (231)

► [2016](#) (206)

► [2015](#) (205)

► [2014](#) (241)


► [2013](#) (232)

► [2012](#) (245)

► [2011](#) (262)

► [2010](#) (247)

► [2009](#) (88)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [1:24 PM](#) No comments: 

Med School Café to address cervical cancer



Jennifer Young Pierce, M.D., M.P.H., FACOG, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the USA College of Medicine and a gynecologic oncologist at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute, will present "Not Just a Pap: Cervical Cancer Prevention in 2021" at the Med School Café lecture on Friday, Jan. 22, at noon. The event will be held virtually via Zoom.

Pierce will discuss the latest screening guidelines for cervical cancer and the role that HPV vaccination plays in preventing the disease. She also will touch on how to partner the HPV vaccine with COVID-19 vaccines and answer viewer questions.

Pierce serves as leader of cancer control and prevention at the MCI as well as residency program director for obstetrics and gynecology at USA Health. She is the host of The Cancering Show podcast.

[Register for the lecture on Zoom.](#)

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 treatment available.

For more information, contact Kim Partridge at kepartridge@health.southalabama.edu.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [12:40 PM](#) No comments: 

Annual COM Research Forum winners announced

Two researchers took top prizes at the annual USA College of Medicine Research Forum for separate projects related to herpes-related blindness and atherosclerosis.

The research forum was held on Dec. 11, 2020, in a virtual format and included 53 poster presentations.

"The annual research forum allows young researchers at the College of Medicine to share their work, which is important for their research and developing career," said Sarah Sayner, Ph.D., associate professor of physiology and cell biology at the USA College of Medicine and co-chair for the event. "Not only does the forum give them that experience, but it also helps to establish new collaboration among the various researchers."

Rachel Rodenberg, a second-year graduate student in basic medical sciences, won first place in the graduate student category for her poster presentation on



Rachel Rodenberg won first place in the graduate student category for her research on herpes stromal keratitis.

herpes stromal keratitis, the leading cause of infectious blindness in developed countries.

Rodenberg's research involved a way to identify inflammatory cells in a cornea infected by the herpes simplex virus. "There is a critical need to study this disease because the standard of care has been anti-viral therapy, but there is an emergence of anti-viral

resistant mutants leading us to need to discover a new treatment for the disease," she said.

Among the cells causing inflammation in the cornea are neutrophils, the most abundant white blood cell in the cornea following infection. Rodenberg was able to use single-cell RNA sequencing to identify a subset of neutrophils as a possible target for developing new therapies for herpes-related blindness.

Rodenberg received a \$100 gift card. Rodenberg's work was performed in the lab of Robert A. Barrington, Ph.D., associate professor of microbiology and immunology. She was assisted by Raymond J. Langley, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology; Robert N. Lausch, Ph.D., professor emeritus in microbiology and immunology; fourth-year medical student Lexie Gibson; and graduate student Grant Daly.

Abigail Boyd took second place in the graduate student category, winning a \$75 gift card. Third place and a \$50 gift card went to Jennifer Knighten.

First place in the postdoctoral category went to James M. Murphy, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the department of biochemistry and molecular biology, for his poster presentation on atherosclerosis. He received a \$100 gift card.

Atherosclerosis, also known as hardening of the arteries, is a chronic inflammatory disease involving the buildup of fats, cholesterol and other substances on the artery walls.


Murphy sought to inhibit focal adhesion kinase (FAK), which has been shown to play a key role in inflammation of the arteries. He found that using drugs to inhibit FAK reduced atherosclerosis in mice by increasing the outflow of cholesterol from lipid-laden foam cells, which are critical to the progression of the disease. There are no therapies directly targeting foam cells, Murphy said, and more study is needed to follow results over a longer period of time.



James M. Murphy, Ph.D., took first place in the postdoctoral category for his poster presentation on atherosclerosis.

His work was performed in the lab of Steve Lim, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology. He also was assisted by Kyuho Jeong, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the department. Murphy's research was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health and an intramural grant from the USA College of Medicine.

Co-chairs for the research forum were Sayner and Luciana Madeira da Silva, Ph.D., research assistant professor of oncologic sciences at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 12:16 PM No comments: 

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

USA College of Medicine represented in Mobile Bay's 40 Under 40



From left, Nicolette Holliday, M.D.; Philip Almalouf, M.D.; Benjamin Niland, M.D.; Richard Menger, M.D., M.P.A.; and Katrina Weaver, M.D.

Five faculty members and two alumni from the USA College of Medicine were named to Mobile Bay's 2020 40 Under 40. Each year, Mobile Bay magazine recognizes 40 individuals under the age of 40 who demonstrate leadership, professional excellence and a commitment to the Mobile Bay area.

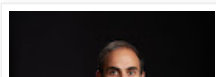
Philip Almalouf, M.D., is an assistant professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine and a pulmonologist at USA Health. A native of Damascus, Syria, Almalouf came to Mobile as a pulmonary critical care fellow in 2009. A Red Sash faculty member, he has won many awards, including four John Bass Awards for Teaching and the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award. Almalouf serves as medical director for Homedica and St. Joseph Hospice. He volunteers at Victory Health Partners and is active in community education efforts.

Nicolette Holliday, M.D., is an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the USA College of Medicine and an obstetrician-gynecologist at USA Health. Holliday earned her medical degree from the USA College of Medicine, where she also completed her residency training. She was the first OB-GYN in the Mobile and Baldwin county region to receive her Focused Practice Designation in Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology and has recently opened up a division at USA Health to care for these patients. Holliday also serves as the OB-GYN clerkship director, where she mentors future healthcare providers.

Richard Menger, M.D., M.P.A., is an assistant professor of neurosurgery at the USA College of Medicine, a neurosurgeon and chief of complex spine surgery at USA Health, and director of the Spine Institute of the South. Menger graduated with honors from Cornell University and Georgetown University School of Medicine. After a seven-year neurosurgery residency, he went on to complete the Advanced Pediatric Spinal Deformity Fellowship at Columbia University Medical Center. He also was awarded the Hale Champion Public Service Fellowship at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where he earned a master of public administration. Menger, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Reserves, was deployed to New York this past spring during the first wave of COVID-19.

Benjamin Niland, M.D., is an assistant professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine and a gastroenterologist and interim program director of gastroenterology at USA Health. Niland was instrumental in building the motility program at the USA Health Digestive Health Center, which aims to improve the lives of many patients in our region. His interests include esophageal disease, GI physiology and functional disease and inflammatory bowel disease. An active member of St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Niland volunteers his time to help those in underserved communities during medical mission trips.

Katrina Weaver, M.D., is an assistant professor of surgery and pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a pediatric surgeon at Children's & Women's Hospital. Since joining USA Health in January 2020, Weaver has made significant advances in the pediatric burn and pediatric trauma departments. She created the area's only pediatric and adolescent bariatric program, which provides new surgery options for young patients dealing with obesity. Weaver also volunteers on international medical mission trips, and collects and ships medical supplies to underserved people around the globe.




Ankit Gulati, M.D., M.B.A., a 2011 graduate of the USA College of Medicine, is a rehabilitation physician and



firmity Health J.L. Bedsole Rotary Rehabilitation Hospital. Quality and compassionate rehabilitative care for patients affected by severe illness or injury. As medical director of Rotary I and Colony Rehabilitation, he has led the charge for both and maintain accreditation from the Commission on Rehabilitation Facilities. Gulati also is working on developing a for those affected by COVID-19 in our community.

y Jr., M.D., a 2013 graduate of the USA College of Medicine, is a family medicine physician with Alabama Medical Group. In his first two years there, he was elected to serve on the practice's board of directors. The board-certified family medicine physician, along with another doctor, started the new aesthetics division within AMG. He has served on numerous professional and community boards throughout his education and career in medicine. Murphy also is involved with The Fuse Project, a nonprofit benefiting Gulf Coast children.



Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [10:44 AM](#) No comments: 

[Newer Posts](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Posts](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)

StatCounter

Simple theme. Powered by [Blogger](#).