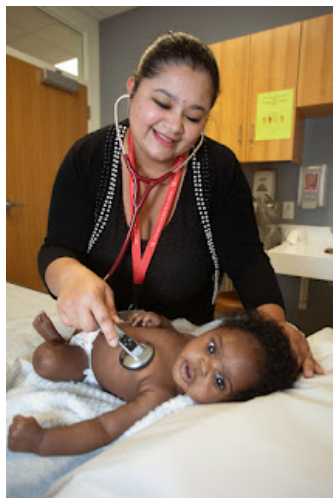


Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, January 15, 2021

Pediatric cardiologist Athira Nair, M.D., joins USA COM faculty



Athira Nair, M.D., assistant professor of pediatric cardiology, listens to a baby's heart.

To better serve children with heart conditions living on the upper Gulf Coast, USA Health has expanded its pediatric cardiology division with the addition of Athira Nair, M.D.

Nair's areas of expertise include congenital heart disease, fetal cardiology, arrhythmia and diseases such as obesity and high cholesterol. Most recently, Nair served as an assistant clinical professor for pediatric cardiology at the University of California San Francisco in Fresno, Calif., where she worked for four years.

In her new role with the region's only academic health system, Nair is an assistant professor of pediatric cardiology at the USA College of Medicine.

David Gremse, M.D., professor and chair of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine, said there is a critical need for more pediatric cardiologists in Alabama. The state has 1.73

pediatric cardiologists per 100,000 children, which is the lowest in the Southeast and well below the national average of 3.5.

"Not only will Dr. Nair increase the access to care for children in need of a pediatric cardiologist, but she will also bring added expertise in advanced cardiac imaging, such as cardiac MRI in children," he said.

Nair is working alongside Lynn Batten, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and director of USA Health's Division of Pediatric Cardiology. "I am very excited to have Dr. Nair join me, not only because congenital heart disease is the No. 1 birth defect, but also because she has special interests in dysautonomia, pulmonary hypertension, hyperlipidemia and obesity. We are seeing these health conditions with increasing frequency in our area, and I am delighted that USA Health can expand our services for these patients," Batten said.

Nair said she was attracted to USA Health because of the diverse health needs presented by our patient population. She also was drawn to caring for children with heart issues because of the constant opportunities for growth.

"You can't get comfortable in it, because every day is unpredictable in pediatric cardiology," she said. "Every patient is a challenge, and you are constantly learning. I wanted that challenge. I want to take this technology and my knowledge, and apply it to the rest of the world."

In addition to pediatric cardiology, Nair also is deeply interested in global health issues and has performed mission work in underserved areas where people had little to no access to adequate healthcare.

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She hopes to contribute to diversifying and optimizing patient care at USA Health.

Nair received a medical degree from Amrita Institute of Medical Science in Kochi, India. She completed residency training in pediatrics at UF Health Shands Children's Hospital in Gainesville, Fla., and a pediatric cardiology fellowship at Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pa. She is board certified in pediatric cardiology by the American Board of Pediatrics.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [8:00 AM](#) No comments: 

Thursday, January 14, 2021

Meet a Med Student: Taran Carrasco



This regular feature highlights a student at the USA College of Medicine.

Taran Carrasco

Age: 22

Class of: 2024

Hometown: Andalusia, Ala.

Undergrad/graduate institution: University of Mississippi


Degrees earned: Bachelor of Arts in public policy leadership

Interests and hobbies: Drawing, painting, playing guitar, exercising, traveling and being outdoors

Something unique about me: I was born completely blind in my right eye due to a detached retina and an optic nerve atrophy.

Three of my favorite things: The Grand Canyon, being at the beach, and any time spent with loved ones.



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

Mark your calendar: Grand rounds

Surgery Grand Rounds

"Management of Colorectal Liver Metastases"

Annabelle Fonseca, M.D., MHS, assistant professor of surgery, USA College of Medicine

7 to 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 15

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► 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)

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► 03/07 - 03/14 (7)

► 02/28 - 03/07 (6)

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► 2009 (88)

Zoom: <https://usahealthsystem.zoom.us/j/98463457684>

Contact: Tyronda Rogers at 251-445-8230 or
tmrogers@health.southalabama.edu

Pediatrics Grand Rounds

"Molecular Era in Diagnosis and Treatment of Pediatric Gliomas"

Rene McNall-Knapp, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics hematology/oncology,
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

8 to 9 a.m. Friday, Jan. 15

Zoom: <https://southalabama.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJctcu-tqj8rG9P-0kxcoXmidDQTi5ZSVno0>

Contact: Jessica Petro at 251-415-8688 or jpetro@health.southalabama.edu

Cardiology Grand Rounds

"Atrial Fibrillation – Rate vs. Rhythm Control"

Maulikkumar Patel, M.D., cardiology resident, University Hospital

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15

Zoom: <https://usahealthsystem.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJApceGsrzMsHt2gFsBT02ShnccVZpx-dS3->

Contact: Donna Gregory at 251-471-7923 or dgregory@health.southalabama.edu

Mental Health Grand Rounds


"Anxiety"

Christina Talerico, M.D., Psychiatrist, AltaPointe Health

8 to 9 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20

Zoom: <https://southalabama.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcsf-isqjMiHtyYx3UlyuC-50kwISE7ai2f>

Contact: Sharrie Cranford at scanford@southalabama.edu

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:49 AM](#) No comments: 

'We must all do our part' to fulfill MLK's vision

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day approached, medical students at the University of South Alabama recalled the Civil Rights leader and the importance of drawing on his legacy as future physicians.

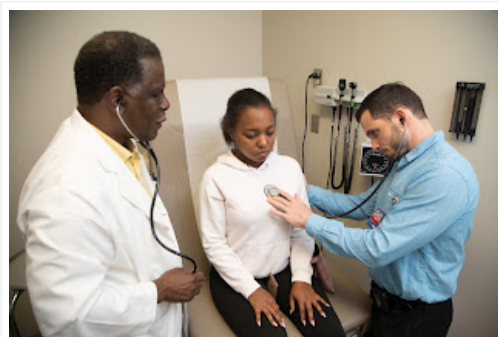
"Health equality was a central part of Dr. Martin Luther King's vision for a better America," said Angela S. Mosley-Johnson, of York, Ala., a fourth-year medical student at the USA College of Medicine. "He saw healthcare as a basic human right, which should be accessible, independent of a person's race, economic status, religion, etc."

Almost 55 years ago, King and other Civil Rights leaders spoke out against segregated hospitals and the mistreatment of Black people at the hands of physicians and other healthcare providers. Each year, the nation observes the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday on the third Monday of January, declaring it a national day of service.

"It's very important to be aware and empathetic to this history because some

patients may be reluctant to seek medical help because of it," said Mosley-Johnson, who intends to pursue a career as an OB/GYN. "I love that there is scheduled time to commemorate Dr. King's vision each year, but we also must all do our part to help fulfill his vision of quality, accessible health care for all."

Brittany Jackson, a third-year medical student, said that King's legacy compels medical students to care for all patients and to address health inequities in our communities. "It is crucial that every patient, regardless of race, background,



Johnson Haynes Jr., M.D., left, director of the USA Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center and professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine, looks on as William Crittenden, M.D., a family medicine resident with USA Health, examines a patient.

culture or socioeconomic status, receive the best medical care that we, as physicians, have to offer," she said. "We must work to fight for health equality at all costs, as it affects our patients and our communities."

Jackson, who is co-vice president of the USA chapter of the Student National Medical Association, said that, as an African American woman, she is continuously reminded of MLK's contributions. "Not only do we commemorate his vision with a single holiday, but we also have the opportunity to live out his vision each day, striving to serve with dignity and compassion," she said.

"MLK Day is an opportunity for every person to contribute to this vision," said Franklin Trimm, M.D., associate dean for diversity and inclusion at the USA College of Medicine. "We can support those in need. We can volunteer for a community service organization. We can improve our own understanding of the impact of race inequality."

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) encourages everyone to consider:

- A virtual town hall meeting, "Thursday Talk with the 100 Black Men: COVID-19 and Healthcare 2.0" is set for 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14. It is hosted by the 100 Black Men of Mobile, Inc. [Registration is available on Eventbrite.](#)
- [USA MLK Week of Unity & Service 2021.](#) Activities on this site include ways to help the homeless in our community, a virtual screening of the film, "There's Never Been a Time," and a virtual panel discussion on "Equal Justice across Generations." The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, located in the Medical Sciences Building on USA's main campus, is a drop-off site for contributions for those experiencing homelessness.
- A virtual screening in February of the new documentary film "[Black Men in White Coats.](#)" Stay tuned for details.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [11:10 AM](#) No comments: 

Davies appointed associate dean for research at USA College of Medicine



Christopher Davies, Ph.D., believes research is a calling for many people working in the biomedical sciences. He brings that passion for discovery to his new role as associate dean for research at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine.

"The importance of research stems from the need, and often a desperate need, for more medical breakthroughs to improve the lives of people across the world," Davies said. "In USA's case, it also means addressing the health needs of patients

in the Gulf Coast region, where diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer are worryingly prevalent.”

The associate dean for research is a new position at the USA College of Medicine.

“As a member of the senior leadership team, Dr. Davies will promote growth and innovation for the College of Medicine’s research mission as well as facilitate research collaboration among the entire university and health system,” said John Marymont, M.D., MBA, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the USA College of Medicine. “He has the necessary experience and skill set to lead this endeavor.”

Davies will assist faculty to obtain external funding, develop interdisciplinary research teams, promote collaborations supportive of large program and center grants, and position the College of Medicine to capitalize on innovative funding opportunities. He also will oversee USA Health’s clinical trials office, grants administration office, and research core facilities.

“I was drawn here because of the quality and depth of research at USA, as this forms an outstanding platform for future development,” he said. “I was also struck by the strong aspiration of the college and university leadership to grow the research base at USA, coupled with the obviously strong potential to do so. At a time when it seems that research is being scaled back at some institutions, it is refreshing to see USA make a strong declaration that research is important.”


Davies said expanding clinical research already is a clear priority, and he will be looking for areas that could be competitive for large center funding. “The Center for Lung Biology illustrates the success that can be achieved by drawing researchers together from different disciplines under a common theme,” he said.

Most recently, Davies was assistant provost for research infrastructure and a professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. He also was interim chair of the Department of Oral Health Sciences.

Davies received a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Bristol in Bristol, England. He completed postdoctoral training at the University of Bristol, Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. He is a member of the American Society for Microbiology.

His personal research focuses on the antibiotic resistance of pathogenic bacteria, with a focus on *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*’s resistance to cephalosporins. His lab is working with a pharmaceutical company to translate their understanding of resistance mechanisms to the development of new agents to treat gonorrhea.

“A major crisis is looming as our current armamentarium of antibiotics is depleted by resistance,” he said. “By understanding how bacteria achieve resistance at the molecular level, we hope to design new antimicrobials that circumvent such mechanisms.”

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [9:42 AM](#) No comments: 

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

USA researchers use national grant to study underlying causes of lupus



Aishwarya Prakash, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, is collaborating with researchers to uncover the genetic and environmental causes of lupus.


With a goal of developing better treatments for lupus, researchers at the USA College of Medicine are working on a project with other national collaborators to uncover the genetic and environmental causes of the debilitating disease.

Lupus is a chronic health condition that can cause pain and inflammation in any part of the body. It's life-threatening for some and often impacts different people in different ways. Nearly 90 percent of the 1.5 million people with lupus are women.

Aishwarya Prakash, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, was the recipient of a subcontract award that's part of a larger research endeavor funded by the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences. The eight-year sub-grant was initially funded for approximately \$65,000 in year one.

"We are studying the underlying mechanisms for why a patient might develop lupus as they progress in age," she said. "Understanding why a patient gets a disease is equally as important as treating the disease."

Prakash and her lab team at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute is collaborating with Joann Sweasy, Ph.D., at the University of Arizona, who received the initial grant. Combining their expertise in molecular genetics, autoimmunity, biochemistry and structural biology enables the researchers to study human variants that lead to systemic lupus erythematosus, or lupus.

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