

# Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, March 12, 2021

## Faculty recognized as world experts in myocardial reperfusion injury



Michael V. Cohen, M.D., professor of physiology and cell biology, and James M. Downey, Ph.D., professor emeritus of physiology and cell biology, are among the top 0.1 percent of scholars writing about myocardial reperfusion injury.

Two faculty members in the USA College of Medicine Department of Physiology and Cell Biology have been recognized as Expertscape "World Experts" on the topic of myocardial reperfusion injury.

Michael V. Cohen, M.D., professor of physiology and cell biology, and James M. Downey, Ph.D., professor emeritus of physiology and cell biology, are among the top 0.1 percent of scholars writing about the subject over the past 10 years, awarding them the highest level of expertise.

"The Cohen and Downey team has been among the worldwide leaders in their field for decades," said Troy Stevens, Ph.D., professor and chair of physiology and cell biology. "We are privileged to work alongside them, and to see firsthand how they continue to impact the future of medicine. They are great role models for faculty and students alike."

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A heart attack, also called a myocardial infarction, occurs when a blood clot forms in a coronary artery and obstructs the flow of blood to the heart. Without enough oxygen-carrying blood supply, a condition known as ischemia, heart muscle cells begin to die. Myocardial necrosis can cause fatal rhythm disturbances or leave the patient with a permanently weakened heart, which often leads to heart failure.

The current therapy is to reopen the artery and restore blood flow with the use of catheter-based techniques or thrombolytic drugs to dissolve the blood clot. Counterintuitively, the resumption of blood flow to the heart, known as reperfusion, causes its own myocardial damage, known as reperfusion injury.



Clinicians and researchers, including Cohen and Downey, have labored to develop an intervention that would block, or at least reduce, reperfusion injury.

"Like detectives, we followed leads and slowly built up a plausible construct of how reperfusion damaged ischemic tissue," Cohen said. "And then this understanding allowed us to propose how one might interfere with the process and ultimately block reperfusion injury."

Cohen, who is also a cardiologist at USA Health, said researchers have been successful at blocking myocardial necrosis in animal models of ischemia/reperfusion. They are now working to develop clinically applicable approaches.

Reducing reperfusion injury would "significantly reduce the amount of cardiac muscle that becomes necrotic and promote better residual cardiac function," he said. "This would decrease both mortality and morbidity, and improve patients' prognosis."

Reflecting on three decades of research devoted to this topic, Cohen said, "it has been an exhilarating journey."

"Our work has stimulated others to become involved and other scientists have made significant advances both in tandem and in parallel, so we have not been working in a vacuum," he said. "We are pleased that our work has formed a foundation on which others can build. We are delighted that others have recognized our accomplishments."

In addition to Cohen and Downey, two other investigators with ties to the USA College of Medicine ranked in the top 0.1 percent: Gerd Heusch, Prof. Dr. med., Dr. h.c., of Essen, Germany; and Derek Yellon, Ph.D., D.Sc., of London, England. Both are adjunct faculty members in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology.

Cohen and Downey's work has been supported by external funding agencies and grants from pharmaceutical companies. Cohen said they are grateful for the financial and institutional support from their colleagues and mentors in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology, namely the late Aubrey Taylor, Ph.D., professor emeritus and chair of physiology; Thomas Lincoln, Ph.D., professor emeritus; and Troy Stevens, Ph.D., professor and chair of physiology and cell biology.

Expertscape objectively ranks researchers and institutions by their expertise based on data from the [National Institutes of Health's PubMed database](#), hosted by the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Learn more at [www.expertscape.com](http://www.expertscape.com).

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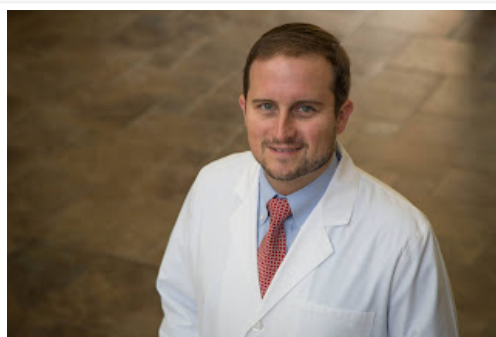
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**Thursday, March 11, 2021**

## Med School Café to address colorectal cancer


John D. Hunter III, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.A.S.C.R.S., assistant professor of surgery at the USA College of Medicine and a colorectal surgeon with USA Health, will present "Colorectal Cancer Awareness" at the Med School Café lecture at 11 a.m. Monday, March 22. The event will be held virtually via Zoom.



To register for the lecture, visit [https://usahealthsystem.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0oce2qpjsqH9NWy7iXaev-4gvKp3u\\_fLbd](https://usahealthsystem.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0oce2qpjsqH9NWy7iXaev-4gvKp3u_fLbd)

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](mailto:kepartridge@health.southalabama.edu).

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## Watch Match Day 2021 on Facebook

Those who want to view Match Day 2021 at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine can watch a live stream on the college's Facebook page, [@usacollegeofmed](#).

Match Day is set for Friday, March 19, at 11 a.m. at the USA Student Center Ballroom, when fourth-year medical students will find out where they will train as resident physicians. The event is approved to be held in person by the USA Reopening Committee on the condition that it be limited to the members of the Class of 2021 and the staff necessary to facilitate the ceremony.

At the event, the students will take turns announcing their placements and pin the geographical locations on a map on stage.

Last year, USA medical students celebrated virtually when they matched in 23 states, with 42 students matching out-of-state and 23 matching within Alabama.



Natalie Carlisle pins her residency match to the map at Match Day in 2019.

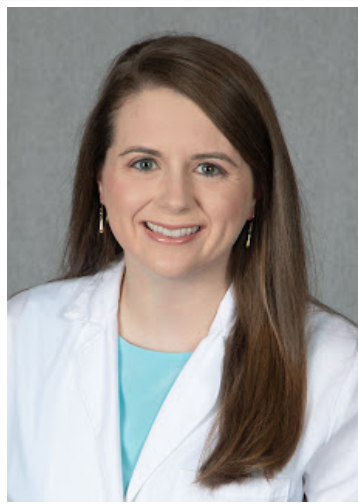
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## Medical students match early in competitive programs

Medical students at the USA College of Medicine have matched in competitive early match programs in ophthalmology and urology.

The majority of medical students participate in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) to find out where they will undergo residency training following graduation. Students who wish to match in ophthalmology and urology participate in a specialty match program that takes place months earlier.

Nationwide, 677 applicants participated in this year's ophthalmology match, filling 498 positions. Meanwhile, 481 applicants participated in the urology match, with 357 residency positions filled.



Lauren "Lexie" Gibson

Lauren "Lexie" Gibson of Eufaula, Alabama, matched into the ophthalmology program at Emory University. Gibson said she developed an interest in ophthalmology while learning about lens refraction at Auburn University, where she graduated in biomedical sciences.

"This initial interest was fostered during medical school by shadowing local physicians in both the clinic and the operating room, where I immediately was fascinated by the field of ophthalmology," Gibson said. "From seeing patients in clinic, performing in-office procedures and managing patients' conditions with medications to the complex surgeries in the OR, ophthalmology was the perfect specialty for me."

Gibson, who will be the first physician in her family, said she is grateful to the USA College of Medicine faculty and staff, ophthalmologists at Premier Medical Group, Vision Partners and Alan Franklin, M.D., for providing her with experiences that led her to choose ophthalmology.

Stuart McFarland of Madison, Alabama, matched in ophthalmology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. He said he looks forward to caring for and improving the vision of his future patients. "I appreciate how important vision is to each person, and I love how impactful the field of ophthalmology can be on a patient's quality of life," he said.

McFarland, who will be the first physician in his family, said his interest in ophthalmology was sparked during a clinical rotation with a neurology resident who will train in a neuro-ophthalmology fellowship next year. "Following that spark, it was the shadowing work with the ophthalmologists at Premier Medical and Vision Partners that sealed my love of the field," he said.



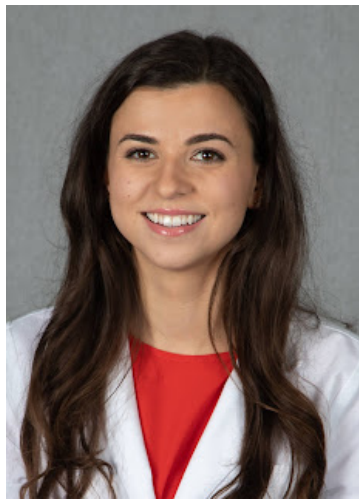
Stuart McFarland

Alexis "Lexie" Kentros of Birmingham matched in urology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where she will be the first female resident to train in the program.

"I can't wait for the opportunity to learn even more about my field as I begin to make clinical decisions on my own," Kentros said. "I am particularly excited to be joining UT Knoxville because of the teaching style and the camaraderie between residents."

Kentros said she began narrowing down her residency intentions during her third year of medical school. "I knew I loved the operating room but couldn't decide





Alexis "Lexie" Kentros

which specialty was for me," she said. "It wasn't until I did my urology elective that I realized it was a perfect fit. I loved the variety of pathology, the surgeries and the ability to become an expert in my field."

Kentros said she also was drawn to the field's focus on improving patients' quality of life. "It is especially rewarding to see how happy patients are post-operatively," she said.

The other medical student matching



Jordan Matthews Smith


in urology was Jordan Matthews Smith, who will train at the University of Florida. Smith said she is most excited to be a resident at a renowned healthcare institution in a program that is nationally ranked.

"Urology encompasses everything I desire for my career: being on the cutting edge of surgical technology, having longitudinal relationships with my patients, and the opportunity to truly improve my patients' quality of life," she said. "Urologists are also known as very gregarious, upbeat surgeons, which I felt fit my personality well."

Smith and Kentros said they are grateful for the operating room staff at USA Health University Hospital and the urologists at University Urology for supporting them on their educational journey.

The Fairhope native has rooted for the Florida Gators throughout her childhood because her mother is a UF graduate. "She was so excited when I broke the news to her and my dad," Smith said. "Living in Gainesville and returning to 'The Swamp' will feel so familiar and bring back many great family memories."

Most of the graduating class of 2021 will find out their residency matches at the USA College of Medicine's Match Day ceremony on Friday, March 19, at the USA Student Center Ballroom. Students will attend in person, with family and friends watching the live-streamed event online because of social distancing restrictions caused by COVID-19.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [12:15 PM](#) No comments: 

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

## Meet a Med Student: Priscilla Perez

### Priscilla Perez

**Age:** 25

**Class of:** 2022

**Hometown:** Tampa, Fla.

**Undergrad/grad institution:** University of South Alabama

**Degrees earned:** Bachelor of Science in biomedical sciences




**Interests, hobbies:** Cooking, movies, music, documentaries. Taking my dogs, Winston and



**Something unique about me:** Born and raised in Mobile, Alabama. I went to pre-law at the University of South Florida for two years before moving to South Alabama for pre-med. I have four siblings – three brothers and a sister. Spanish was my first language.

**Three of my favorite things:** All animals, all food (not picky) and spending time with family.



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## Student-Run Free Clinic makes an impact in 2020

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of South Alabama Student-Run Free Clinic (SRFC) continued to help underserved individuals in Mobile. Under the guidance of preceptors, student-led teams found new ways to serve during a time when they were unable to provide direct patient care due to social distancing requirements.



Students focused on donation drives, obtaining new items for the clinic and helping to provide COVID-19 testing, among other activities. "When we started the year, we were excited to directly provide care to as many patients as possible and to extend this experience to as many volunteers as we could," said Greg Overbeek, president of the SRFC and a third-year medical student. "While COVID prevented us from doing this, we still wanted to do what we could to serve our patients."

During the year, the SRFC secured \$1,000 worth of medical and cleaning supplies, established an electronic medical records system and received more than \$7,000 in grants, its annual report said.

"These students spent countless hours on phone calls, meeting over Zoom, strategically planning and even sewing," said Allison Rudd, Ed.D., FNP-C, director of the SRFC and assistant professor in the USA Simulation Program. "I am so proud of these #SouthStrong students."

During 2020, the SRFC:

- Collected more than 400 homemade masks.
- Provided more than 100 bottles of hand sanitizer.
- Obtained a refrigerator and installed new cabinets at the Salvation Army.
- Established respite care to provide short-term post-surgical care and housing for an underserved patient.
- Interacted with 30 patients at Homeless Connect and distributed socks and hygiene items.
- Administered flu vaccines to patients.
- Partnered with the Mobile County Health Department to offer COVID-19 testing.

The student-led board included:

- Faculty adviser: Alison Rudd, Ed. D., FNP-C, director of the USA SRFC and assistant director of the USA Simulation Program
- President: Greg Overbeek
- Vice president: Corey Phillis
- Secretary: Katie Knight
- Treasurer: Madeline Tucker
- Co-outreach coordinators: Lexie Hensley and Vijay Vobbilisetty
- Volunteer coordinator: Addie Clark
- Co-research coordinators: Ryan Heslin and Melody Zeidan
- SGA liaison: Preston White
- College of Medicine liaison: Camila Ocha
- Occupational therapy liaison: Megan Shaw
- Pharmacy liaison: Lauren Steil
- Nursing liaison: Lauren Prescott
- Audiology liaison: Rachelle Shepard
- Physical therapy liaison: Tena Newhouse
- Presidents emeritus: Ravi Rajendra (USA COM M4) and Cameron Clary (AU Harrison School of Pharmacy P4)

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:52 AM](#) No comments: 

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021**

## USA College of Medicine faculty shape the future of medical education



From left, Anthony Gard, Ph.D., assistant dean for curriculum assessment and evaluation; Abu-Bakr Al-Mehdi, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pharmacology; and Ehab Molokhia, M.D., M.P.H., professor of family medicine, participated in assessment activities in 2020.

Three representatives from the University of South Alabama College of Medicine participated in activities in 2020 for the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) exams and the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

By contributing to NBME exams and the USMLE program, faculty members at the USA College of Medicine support the design and development of the highest quality assessments of competencies relevant to the practice of medicine in the United States and around the world. These assessments provide information to individuals, schools, programs and, in the case of licensure for practice, state regulatory boards.

"We are proud of and deeply grateful to our faculty members who have given their time and expertise to the development and continual improvement of these assessments, especially in such a challenging year," said John Marymont, M.D., M.B.A., vice president for medical affairs and dean of the USA College of Medicine.

Anthony Gard, Ph.D., assistant dean for curriculum assessment and evaluation, and professor of medical education at the USA College of Medicine, is the College of Medicine's liaison to the NBME. As the liaison representative, he is responsible

for exploring all issues related to the NBME and USMLE at the medical school, disseminating relevant information, and maintaining the connection to the NBME's secure website.


Since 2011, Gard has served as the executive chief proctor for NBME examinations. He interacts with the NBME on all matters pertaining to the security and administration of the exams and oversees all administrative tasks for the provision of exam services, including the selection of proctors and the arrangement for suitable testing space.

Abu-Bakr Al-Mehdi, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pharmacology at the USA College of Medicine, served on the USMLE Pharmacology and Biochemistry Test Material Development Committee. Members developed and reviewed the test items and cases from which the USMLE is composed. These activities were challenging and required talented individuals who are highly respected by their peers.

Ehab Molokhia, M.D., M.P.H., professor of family medicine at the USA College of Medicine and a family medicine physician with USA Health, served on the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills Interdisciplinary Review Committee. Members were responsible for reviewing performance data for cases to ensure their accuracy and currency.

Following the March 2020 suspension of the exam because of the COVID-19 outbreak, Molokhia joined the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills Test Material Development Task Force to identify the optimal approach to assess clinical skills for licensure in a post-pandemic environment. This work required individuals who could bring thoughtful and varied perspectives to the challenge at hand.

Learn more about the National Board of Medical Examiners at [www.nbme.org](http://www.nbme.org).  
Learn more about the United States Medical Licensing Examination at [www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org).

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