

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Register now: New Orleans social set for June 12



The USA College of Medicine Medical Alumni Association will host a social at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 12, at The Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans.

[Register you and your guests for the summer social.](#)

The MAA Board of Directors is pleased to provide room rate discounts to those who support the MAA through active membership or recurring annual support.

For those interested in making a weekend out of the event, the MAA has opened up a room block to those who would like to stay an evening or two at The Roosevelt. [Make your reservations before May 28.](#)

If you would like to take advantage of a 50 percent discount on the room rate, [make sure your annual membership is up to date or join as a lifetime member.](#) MAA membership is available to USA College of Medicine graduates as well as current USA COM/USA Health faculty and staff.

If you would like to take advantage of a deeper discount, [sign up to support the MAA's Annual Fund on a recurring schedule.](#) Those who sign up for auto-draft of at least \$50/month or \$600 annually will be eligible for a 75 percent discount on the Friday and Saturday room rate.

Mark your calendars for the upcoming in-person reunions. Since we haven't had a reunion in two years, these events will celebrate all classes while we work to get back on class-year rotations.

2022 MAA Reunion Weekend

Celebrating all classes

June 10-12, 2022

The Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama

2023 MAA Reunion Weekend

USA COM's 50th Anniversary

Celebrating all classes

June 9-11, 2023

The Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama

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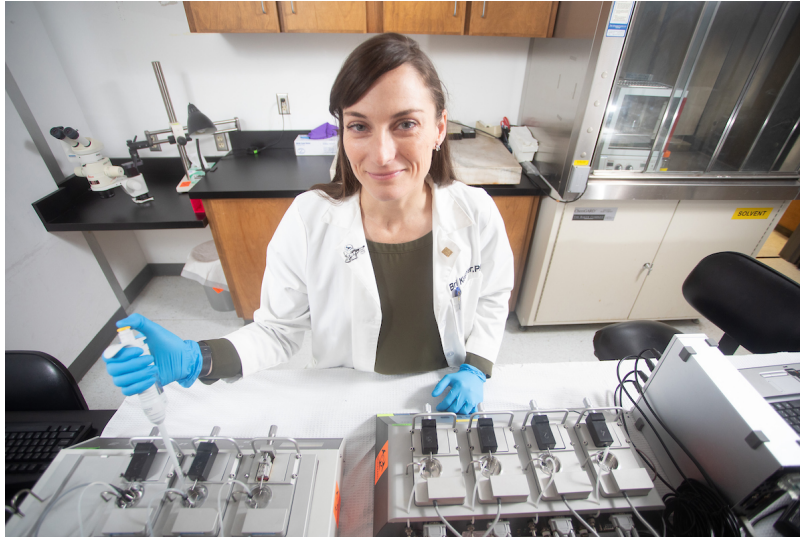
Kestler earns national award for research on uterine contractions

Register now: New Orleans social set for June 12

Kestler earns national award for research on uteri...

Meet a Med Student: Andy Hu

COM Faculty Spotlight: Aishwarya Prakash, Ph.D.



Graduate student Bri Kestler examines human uterine smooth muscle cells in the physiology and cell biology lab.

One in 10 babies is born prematurely in the United States. Bri Kestler hopes her research will help improve that statistic.

Kestler, a sixth-year student in the Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program at the USA College of Medicine, said that much about the control and synchronization of uterine contractions, both in pregnant and non-pregnant tissues, is still unknown. In her research, Kestler is examining the relationship between small-conductance calcium-activated potassium channels and internal calcium-release channels in human uterine smooth muscle cells.

"Through my work I am trying to determine if a functional relationship between these channels can be targeted and pharmacologically exploited to regulate uterine contractions," she said. "Every pathway or association identified in the control of uterine contractions is a new target for potential medications that could help calm uterine contractions in preterm labor, or ramp them up when labor is ineffective or the uterus becomes dystocic."

Kestler created a digital poster with accompanying audio and presented her research at the Experimental Biology 2021 Conference, held virtually April 27-30. She was overjoyed to receive the Research Recognition Award from the Cellular and Molecular Physiology Section of the American Physiological Society.

"It's an honor to just be considered for this award, but even more so, to be chosen from amongst the most accomplished graduate students and postdoctoral fellows," she said.

Working with human tissue meant Kestler's study sample sizes were smaller than students working with animal models or cell cultures. "I was very pleased the judges appraised the potential magnitude that work with human tissue can have, and that tissue acquisition is generally more difficult," she said.

As part of her graduate studies, Kestler performs research in the lab of Mark S. Taylor, Ph.D., professor of physiology and cell biology at the USA College of Medicine.




Bri Kestler received a research recognition award from the American Physiological Society.

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"Bri's work highlights our expanding translational research initiatives at USA College of Medicine," Taylor said. "These valuable studies are possible through the collaborative efforts and commitment of basic science and clinical partners."

Kestler said, "My long-term hope for this field is that more medications for the treatment of preterm labor can be developed and the rate of babies born prematurely in the United States can be reduced from the staggering 10 percent it is today."

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Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Meet a Med Student: Andy Hu



Andy Hu

Age: 23

Class of: 2023

Hometown: Gulfport, Miss.

Undergrad/grad institution: University of South Alabama


Degrees earned: Bachelor of Science in biomedical sciences with a minor in general business

Interests, hobbies: I enjoy tennis, cooking, restoration projects, and my pets.

Something unique about me: I have a food page on Instagram dedicated to my cooking. @medchef2023

Three of my favorite things: Quality time with loved ones, unique foods, traveling on a budget



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COM Faculty Spotlight: Aishwarya Prakash, Ph.D.



Aishwarya Prakash, Ph.D

Academic title: Associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology

Joined the USA College of Medicine faculty: March 2016

What does your position in the USA College of Medicine entail?

In my position, I pursue my research interests in DNA repair and structural biology, teach classroom style lectures for the medical and graduate students, mentor the members of my laboratory, and perform services to the university and other professional societies in the form of committees, editorial and grant review panels.

**What is your favorite or most rewarding part of your position?**

The best part of my job is to see my mentees succeed, whether it be an experiment that worked or a publication that made the cover of a magazine. Their joy is my joy; their success is my success.

What research initiatives are you involved in?


I am a cancer biologist with a keen interest in structural biology. My laboratory is focused on environmental agents that induce DNA damage and its impact on cancer formation and progression.

What is your advice for basic medical sciences students?

Work hard and it will pay off in the end.

What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

I enjoy long walks in the sun and on the beach. I love to paint and read books.

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