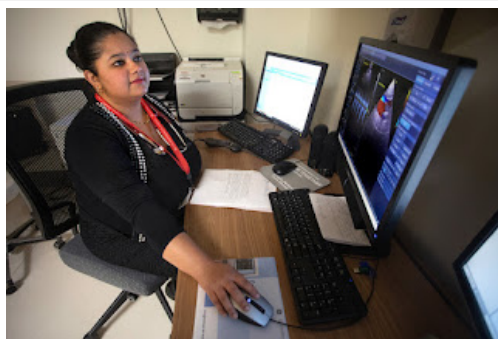


# Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, July 9, 2021

## Study aims to measure mental health impacts of COVID-19 on adolescents



Athira Nair, M.D., seeks to better understand the impact of the pandemic on adolescent mental health.

Seeking to better understand the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on middle and high school students, USA Health pediatric cardiologist Athira Nair, M.D., is inviting adolescents who were in grades 6 through 12 between February 2020 and June 2021 to complete an anonymous online survey.

"I started noticing a lot of children in my clinic were clinically depressed or their

parents were talking about their child being depressed," said Nair, assistant professor of pediatric cardiology at the USA College of Medicine. "We also know that social isolation in this age group can lead to mental health issues."

Nair, with assistance from second-year medical student Justin R. Penninger, created an online survey aimed at students who were in at least sixth grade and no older than a senior in high school when the pandemic emerged in the United States in February 2020.

Research shows one in six young people in the United States between the ages of 6 and 17 experience a mental health disorder each year. Half of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14.

Since the start of the COVID pandemic, Penninger said, one of the biggest challenges adolescents have faced was moving in-classroom learning to online platforms, drastically reshaping the environments where children learn.

"We created a simple 5- to 10-minute survey that, ideally, sixth through 12th graders will complete," Penninger said. "The results hopefully will give us a more realistic insight into the status of adolescent mental health."

If you know someone who meets the criteria for this survey, please share the link: <https://hsredcap.southalabama.edu/redcap/surveys/?s=EWLDHCER33>

"Our children's mental health is so important," Nair said. "That's why we need to study, support and improve resources available to help young people who suffer from these issues."

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 8:00 AM No comments:

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Study aims to measure mental health impacts of COV...

Meet a Med Student: Cara King

Mark your calendar for grand rounds

Faculty Spotlight: Ananthasekar Ponnambalam, M.D.

Vaccine 'encouraging' in certain

Thursday, July 8, 2021

## Meet a Med Student: Cara King

### Cara King

**Age:** 24

**Class of:** 2024

**Hometown:** Baton Rouge, La.

**Undergrad/grad institution:** Xavier University of Louisiana

**Degrees earned:** Bachelor of Science in psychology

**Interests, hobbies:** I enjoy spending time with family, traveling, shopping, cooking, painting and decorating.

**Something unique about me:** I once did a homestay in Germany where I was able to attend school with my host.

**Three of my favorite things:** I love live music, dogs (especially the small ones), and trying new restaurants.

**What I enjoy most about being a student at the USA College of Medicine:** I enjoy being a part of a supportive community that enables me to get to know faculty and peers on a personal level.



Posted by Med School Watercooler at 12:37 PM No comments:

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

## Mark your calendar for grand rounds

### Orthopaedic Surgery Grand Rounds

"Pediatric Femur Fractures"

7 a.m. Friday, July 9

Strada Patient Care Center

Contact: Rhonda Smith at 665-8251 or rhondasmith@health.southalabama.edu

### OB-GYN Grand Rounds

"How to Do A Quality Improvement Project"

Mary Munn, M.D., professor and chair of obstetrics and gynecology, USA College of Medicine

7:30 a.m. Friday, July 9

The Atlantis Room and via Zoom

Zoom registration:

[https://southalabama.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwrcOyprTiHNzEXgarNapK\\_VhLZDLejL8o](https://southalabama.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwrcOyprTiHNzEXgarNapK_VhLZDLejL8o)

Contact: Heather Glass at 415-1492 or hglass@health.southalabama.edu

### Internal Medicine/Pediatric Grand Rounds

"We're All in This Together: How to Provide Tobacco Use Treatment to All Our Patients"

Susan Walley, M.D., professor of pediatrics, University of Alabama at Birmingham

8 a.m. Friday, July 16

Zoom: <https://southalabama.zoom.us/j/97693597087>

Contact: Linda Ching at 470-7900 or lching@health.southalabama.edu

See the full schedule of grand rounds on CME tracker.

ovarian cancer pa...

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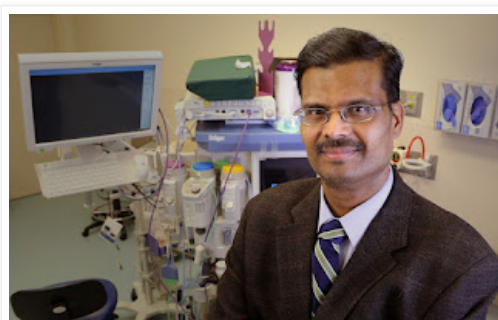
## Faculty Spotlight: Ananthasekar Ponnambalam, M.D.

**Ananthasekar Ponnambalam, M.D.**

**Academic title:** Professor of pediatrics

**Joined the USA College of Medicine faculty?** December 2007

**What does your position in the USA COM/USA Health entail?** Pediatric gastroenterology, clinician-educator



**What is your favorite or most rewarding part of your position?** Teaching and positive feedback from patients

**What research initiatives are you involved in?** I did work on constipation and Lubiprostone. I am currently helping residents in congenital diarrheas.

**What is your advice for medical students?** Follow the Hippocrates Oath.

**What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?** Travel



Posted by Med School Watercooler at [11:01 AM](#) No comments: 

**Monday, July 5, 2021**

## Vaccine 'encouraging' in certain ovarian cancer patients, researcher tells ASCO meeting

A vaccine made from a patient's own cancer cells kept ovarian cancer from recurring in a group of patients with specific types of tumors that typically are less responsive to therapy, according to a study presented by a USA Health researcher at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. Further, by analyzing DNA data, researchers were able to predict which ovarian cancer patients were likely to benefit the most from the vaccine.



The presenter, Rodney P. Rocconi, M.D., a gynecologic oncologist at USA Health and professor of gynecologic oncology at the USA College of Medicine, said the results of the VITAL study, a phase 2b clinical trial, set the stage for further clinical research on an international scale.

"These results are extremely encouraging in offering increased survivals in patients that currently have an unmet need with homologous recombination proficient (HRP) ovarian cancer," Rocconi said. "Historically, patients with HRP cancers have significantly lower responses to chemotherapy with survivals that are approximately 20 months lower than other patients with ovarian cancer."


The VITAL trial enrolled patients diagnosed with advanced stage III or IV ovarian cancer who had a complete response to surgery and standard combination chemotherapy. After this response, patients were randomized to either the Vigil vaccine or placebo.

Compared to placebo, patients receiving the Vigil vaccine demonstrated significantly better overall survival at two years from 55 percent to 92 percent. This survival advantage was extended to a three-year overall survival of 40 percent to 70 percent.

The clinical benefit was shown in patients with homologous recombination proficient (HRP) ovarian cancer, which makes up nearly 50 percent of all ovarian cancer diagnoses. These HRP cancers are capable of effectively repairing DNA damage caused by chemotherapy and thus are associated with resistance to traditional therapy.

The researchers also analyzed protein-DNA pathway interactions and found a unique molecular subset that may enhance a patient's sensitivity to the Vigil vaccine.

"It's exciting to demonstrate an effective therapy that possibly could change the standard of care for essentially half of all ovarian cancer patients," Rocconi said. "Although further studies are needed, our research shows that we are able to predict which patients are most likely to benefit from this novel vaccine."

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