

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, August 19, 2021

Payne-Johnson joins family medicine faculty

A passion for physical and mental health led Ann Payne-Johnson, M.D., to join USA Health as a family medicine physician.

"USA Health is a great fit for me because I have an extensive history in fitness training and wellness coaching," said Johnson, who also is an assistant professor of family medicine at the USA College of Medicine. "In addition to my primary care duties, I offer preventative visits that address risk factors and educate patients on ways to better manage their health."



Johnson's passion for wellness started at the age of 13 when she became an aerobics teacher. She originally wanted to be a psychiatrist and worked during medical school in mental health services before transitioning into family medicine.

"I hope to collaborate with the pharmacists, behavioral health clinicians and nutritionists at USA Health to better serve our community," Johnson said. "I want to ensure that we offer appropriate care to patients of all ages and provide healthy ways to maintain it." She plans to use the team to remove barriers to losing and maintaining a healthy weight.

Johnson earned a medical degree from the Spartan Health Sciences University in Vieux Fort, St. Lucia. She completed residency training in family medicine at the University of Tennessee in Jackson, Tenn. She is double board certified in family medicine and obesity medicine.

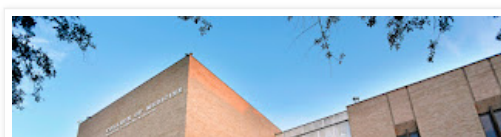
To schedule an appointment with Johnson, call the Department of Family Medicine at 251-434-3475.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 11:56 AM No comments:

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Faculty and staff parking permits available

This is a reminder that all USA faculty and staff who park on campus, for any reason during regular



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- ▶ 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)

Payne-Johnson joins family medicine faculty

Faculty and staff parking permits available

Faculty Spotlight: Christopher Malozzi, D.O., F.A....

Meet a Med Student: Kasey Grant Andrews

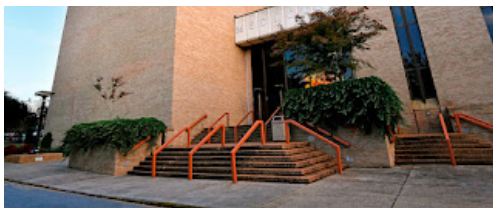
USA researchers awarded \$1 million in grants to st...

Phung presents at international Cancer Genomics Co...

- ▶ 08/08 - 08/15 (4)
- ▶ 08/01 - 08/08 (8)
- ▶ 07/25 - 08/01 (6)

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Faculty and staff parking permit: www.southalabama.edu/parking please purchase one before retu



As always, employees will be able to print out a 21-day temporary permit at the end of the registration process.

Employees may move their decal from vehicle to vehicle as needed; however, employee parking privileges are not transferable to anyone else. Employees also will be able to register up to two different vehicle license plates on their account.

Visitor parking passes cannot be issued to any USA employee or student.

Parking on campus without a parking decal violates parking regulations, and vehicles are subject to being ticketed.

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Faculty Spotlight: Christopher Malozzi, D.O., F.A.C.C.

Christopher Malozzi, D.O., F.A.C.C.

Academic title: Associate professor of internal medicine

Joined the USA College of Medicine faculty: I joined as faculty in 2015. However, I trained at USA from 2006 to 2013. I never would have left if there had been a faculty position available to me when I completed my cardiology fellowship training.



What does your position in the USA COM/USA Health entail?

I have many roles. I serve as associate program director of the Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship Program. This allows me the opportunity to work alongside our program director to shape the training program for our fellows. I also focus on resident and medical student education in the area of cardiology. Apart from my educational responsibilities, I see patients in both the hospital and outpatient clinic setting and participate in clinical research.

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

I really enjoy watching a cardiology fellow mature into a well-rounded cardiologist after three years of training with us. I also enjoy mentoring internal medicine residents and students who are interested in pursuing a career in cardiology. It is rewarding to impart some degree of knowledge or experience into a trainee that might impact future patients and their cardiovascular health.

What research or other initiatives are you involved in?

I am actively building a clinical service line unique to our region in the field of cardio-oncology. As the father of a child with cancer, I learned that there are inherent cardiac issues that can develop as a result of receiving chemotherapy or radiation treatment. I used this personal experience to open a clinic specific to the cardiovascular care of cancer patients. This has led to a great working relationship with the wonderful team of oncologists at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute. It also has led to multiple collaborative research projects from basic science to cardiac imaging.

Listen to Malozzi's interview on The Cancering Show podcast: "[Cancer Treatment and the Heart.](#)"

- ▶ 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)
- ▶ 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)

- ▶ 2020 (191)
- ▶ 2019 (245)
- ▶ 2018 (236)
- ▶ 2017 (231)
- ▶ 2016 (206)
- ▶ 2015 (205)
- ▶ 2014 (241)
- ▶ 2013 (232)
- ▶ 2012 (245)
- ▶ 2011 (262)
- ▶ 2010 (247)
- ▶ 2009 (88)


What is your advice for medical students?

I tell my fellows and trainees on the cardiology service at the beginning of each rotation that we are going to work hard, take good care of our patients, but most of all have fun. Being a doctor is a job just like any other job. You wake up, go to work, come home, and repeat. We have chosen this profession because we care about people. Find something in medicine that you are passionate about – so passionate that going to work each day and caring for people is more fun than it is work.

What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

I have six, very active children; so my hobbies are their hobbies. We play a lot of soccer, football and basketball. We also really enjoy fishing and boating.

faculty spotlight

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Monday, August 16, 2021

Meet a Med Student: Kasey Grant Andrews

Kasey Grant Andrews

Age: 24

Class of: 2023

Hometown: Comer, Ala.

Undergrad/grad institution: Anderson University in Anderson, S.C.

Degrees earned: Bachelor of Science in biochemistry, minor in business

Interests, hobbies: Cooking, co-ed softball, hunting and fishing

Something unique about me: I have a collection of more than 1,200 vinyl records.

Three of my favorite things: Playing with my pups, watching movies with my husband, visiting with my family

What I enjoy most about being a student at the USA College of Medicine:

Knowing that, whatever I am facing in school, I can always find support and a helping hand in a faculty member or a fellow classmate.



Posted by Med School Watercooler at [12:00 PM](#) No comments: 

USA researchers awarded \$1 million in grants to study replication of mitochondrial DNA



From left, research assistant Viktoriya Pastukh, research technologist Natalya Kozhukhar, and Mikhail Alexeyev, Ph.D., professor of physiology and cell biology, seek to better understand how mitochondrial DNA replicates.

In order to treat mitochondrial diseases, scientists first must understand how mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) makes copies of itself. With that goal, the U.S. Department of Defense awarded researchers at the USA College of Medicine two grants, totaling more than \$1.07 million, to study the replication of mitochondrial DNA.

Mikhail Alexeyev, Ph.D., professor of physiology and cell biology at the USA College of Medicine, is principal investigator of the two funded studies. Natalya Kozhukhar, a research technologist, and Viktoriya Pastukh, a research assistant, are working with Alexeyev on the projects.

Mitochondria's main function is to produce energy for the cell. Mitochondrial diseases are a group of inherited genetic disorders that can cause a wide range of health concerns.

"When we think of inheritance, we first think of chromosomes," Alexeyev said. Chromosomes are located in the nucleus of each cell and are present in 23 pairs. In each pair, one chromosome is received from the mother and one from the father. "For a long time, it was thought that these 46 chromosomes determine our genetic makeup. That was until mitochondrial DNA was discovered 60 years ago."

mtDNA molecules are small and circular compared to nuclear chromosomes, which are linear. Unlike nuclear chromosomes, they are present in hundreds to thousands of copies per cell; and different tissues in the body contain different amounts of mtDNA. Moreover, mtDNA is inherited exclusively from the mother.

"In 1987, scientists discovered that mutations in mtDNA can result in incurable, devastating and often lethal diseases, for which we still do not have effective treatments," Alexeyev said.


The effects of these mutations are most evident in organs and tissues that require a lot of energy, such as the heart, brain and muscles. Symptoms can include fatigue and weakness, problems with movement, cognitive disabilities, vision and hearing loss, diabetes, heart disease, kidney and liver failure.

Scientists measure the extent of their understanding of a particular biological process by their ability to reproduce it. "We have a pretty good handle on nuclear chromosomes and even were able to create a bacterium using a made-from-scratch chromosome," Alexeyev said. "However, when it comes to mtDNA, our understanding of its replication remains rudimentary. We are not able to replicate mtDNA in a test tube; and even though most enzymes are interchangeable between humans and mice, mouse cells are unable to replicate human mtDNA and vice versa, and we do not know why."

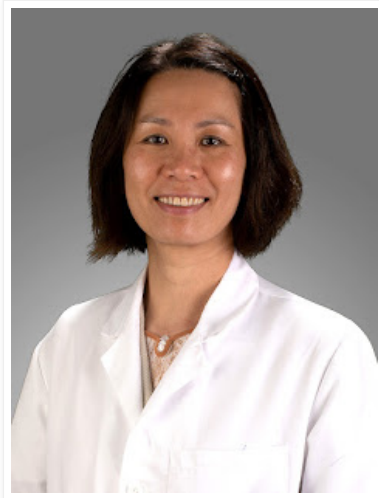
Alexeyev's lab has succeeded in generating human/mouse hybrid cells that maintained human mtDNA for more than a year. Although the approaches are

different, the aim of both funded studies is similar: to find out why mouse nonhybrid cells do not replicate human mtDNA.

"Our goal is to reconstitute human mitochondrial function in mice. Such 'humanized' mice would become an invaluable resource for the development of drugs to treat mitochondrial disease and to study mitochondrial disease in mice," Alexeyev said. "Currently, such mice are not available, which makes mitochondrial diseases extremely difficult to study."

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Phung presents at international Cancer Genomics Consortium meeting



Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of pathology at the USA College of Medicine and director of molecular genetic pathology and dermatopathology at USA Health, participated in the Cancer Genomics Consortium annual meeting, held virtually earlier this month.

At the meeting, which highlighted the latest in clinical and translational genomics research, Phung presented an oral abstract on her lab's research in vascular anomalies.

Phung also led an interactive roundtable discussion on practical approaches to establishing molecular diagnostics in community hospitals and smaller laboratory settings. She shared her insight and perspective from working to

establish molecular cancer testing at USA Health.


One participant gave the feedback: "I really appreciate your leading the roundtable discussion today, and was excited to hear about your passion for bringing molecular testing to underserved and underrepresented areas."

Phung, who served on the annual meeting program committee, helped to organize the meeting and its contents. Other topics presented at the meeting included the next generation of cytogenetics and molecular genetics in leukemia diagnostics, and artificial intelligence applications to drive precision oncology clinical trials.



The Cancer Genomics Consortium was formed in 2009 by a group of clinical cytogeneticists, molecular geneticists and molecular pathologists who were interested in education and promoting best practices in clinical cancer genomics.

The consortium has grown to include more than 400 members from the United States, Canada and abroad.

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