

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, April 8, 2022

Certification program advances life-saving education in obstetrics care

With a goal to improve patient safety and positively impact maternal outcomes, faculty members and residents from the USA Health Department of Family Medicine along with Monroe County Hospital staff recently participated in a training program on Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO) at Monroe County Hospital in Monroeville, Ala.

The certification program is an evidence-based, interprofessional and multidisciplinary course that equips maternity care teams with skills to effectively manage obstetric emergencies.

"It teaches providers from all disciplines, from nursing to obstetrics and family medicine, how to work together as a team to take care of moms and improve outcomes for mothers and babies," said Rebecca Sollie, M.D., associate professor of family medicine in the USA College of Medicine who served as course director for the life support course at Monroe County Hospital in March 2022. "This has become a big issue in our country as maternal mortality rates are high, especially in rural areas or communities with less access to healthcare."

During the course, instructors incorporated teamwork skills and communication strategies so everyone could practice managing emergencies, reducing errors, and increasing patient safety, Sollie said.

The training precedes the start of a new obstetrics program at the USA Health Department of Family Medicine, which is set to begin in July 2022. The initiative aims to provide more obstetrics care experience to residents in rural and urban areas in Alabama where prenatal care often is nonexistent.

The instructors for the certification course were Sollie, a family medicine physician at USA Health; Amelia Hewes, M.D., an obstetrician-gynecologist at USA Health; and Shelley Wagner, M.D., Sadhika Jamiseti, M.D., and Lindsay Harbin, M.D., all family medicine physicians at Monroe County Hospital.

[Learn more about the family medicine obstetrics fellowship program.](#)



Faculty members and residents from the Department of Family Medicine participate in a training program on Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics.

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COM Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day set for April 14



The USA College of Medicine will host a Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day for those who work in the Medical Sciences Building (MSB), Central Services Administration Building (CSAB) and the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases (LID).

The event is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, April 14, at the Alpha Halls courtyard. Lunch will be provided.

Contact Marcina Lang at marcinalang@southalabama.edu for more information.

Pathology seminar to focus on potential therapy for common liver cancer



Devanand Sarkar, M.B.B.S., Ph.D., a professor of human and molecular genetics at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, is the guest speaker for the USA Department of Pathology's upcoming Research Seminar Series.

He will present "RNAi for AEG-1: Potential Therapy for NASH and HCC" at noon on Thursday, April 21, in the

Strada Patient Care Center conference room. Lunch will be served.

Sarkar also serves as the associate director of training and education at the VCU Massey Cancer Center. His research focuses on understanding the molecular mechanism of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common type of primary liver cancer, and developing novel, targeted and effective therapeutic strategies.

For more information, contact Patrick Carlisle at 251-471-7753 or pcarlisle@health.southalabama.edu.

Thursday, April 7, 2022

New research uses AI to potentially reduce hospital readmissions for children

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Mukul Sehgal, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics, cares for a patient at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. His research is using artificial intelligence to potentially reduce readmission rates in hospitalized pediatric patients with pulmonary hypertension.

For many children living with hypertension and other chronic conditions, their young lives can become a series of endless doctor visits, needle jabs for lab work and other dreaded treatments, punctuated by extended hospital stays when their conditions worsen. So if physicians could more accurately predict when a child with a chronic illness was going to become critically ill, they could take steps to intervene before their health declined and hospitalization was required.

That's the idea behind new research from Mukul Sehgal, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at the USA College of Medicine and a pediatric critical care physician at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.

"Working in a pediatric intensive care unit, we see quite a few patients who get admitted for similar medical problems multiple times a year," Sehgal said. "This causes increased morbidity among children who spend prime years of their life recovering from these diseases. We decided to explore ways in which we can identify these high-risk patients and came across the use of artificial intelligence (AI)."

An evolving tool increasingly used in healthcare, AI can help researchers construct prediction models to identify the patients most at risk with much higher accuracy than traditional methods, Sehgal said.

Sehgal and his colleagues used AI to examine the National Readmission Database from 2017 for a review of 5.52 million previous instances where children age 18 and younger with hypertension were readmitted to hospitals. What he discovered is the topic of a January 2022 research article published in the journal *Critical Care Medicine*.

Amod Amritphale, M.D., assistant professor of internal medicine at the USA College of Medicine and an interventional cardiologist with USA Health, is a contributing author on the study.

The research, which took about 10 months to complete, also will be presented at an international conference of the Society of Critical Care Medicine.

Specifically, the research and article highlight the importance of AI in reducing the unplanned 30-day readmission rates in hospitalized pediatric patients with pulmonary hypertension, Sehgal said. By identifying certain characteristics of patients who are discharged from the hospital, clinicians can better predict their probability of being readmitted in 30 days after discharge.



Among the findings was that respiratory infections and mechanical ventilation were associated with increased chances of readmissions among patients suffering from pulmonary hypertension.

"This can help us recognize those patients," he said, "and then schedule an early follow-up with a cardiologist for them, and thus help prevent their readmission" and the escalation of their illness.

Pediatric hypertension has been on the rise for more than 30 years and often is associated with other health conditions. Research from the American Heart Association found that more than three million children in the United States have the condition. Recent AHA heart disease and stroke statistics also show the number impacted may be even higher, estimating some 15% of adolescents have abnormal blood pressure.

Sehgal is excited to present the findings to an international audience: "Sharing our scientific research with such a community opens the door for future collaboration and should help many children across the world. While we did our research on pulmonary hypertension, this can be easily expanded to other diseases and in other age groups."

[Read the article in Critical Care Medicine.](#)

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Meet a Med Student: Ian Thompson

Ian Thompson

Age: 24

Class of: 2023

Hometown: Huntsville, Alabama

Undergrad/grad institution: University of Alabama at Birmingham

Degrees earned: Bachelor of Science in neuroscience

Interests, hobbies: Trivia, Netflix, graphic design, dogs, weightlifting, Greek mythology

Three of my favorite

things: International cuisine, video games (especially Nintendo), and the Oxford comma



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

A large portion of our patient population comprises the disenfranchised and economically disadvantaged – people commonly deprived of the healthcare that they deserve. USA Health works with their patients to ensure that their healthcare needs are met, taking special consideration to compensate for any of these disadvantages.



Faculty Spotlight: Glen Borchert, Ph.D.

Glen Borchert, Ph.D.

Titles: Associate professor of pharmacology, College of Medicine; associate professor of biology, College of Arts & Sciences; and CAREER Investigator, National Science Foundation



Joined the USA College of Medicine faculty: August 2018

What does your position in the USA COM entail?

Research and teaching Basic Medical Sciences students

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

Discovering something new

What research are you involved in?

Identifying novel genetic regulators and defining their roles in disease, cellular biology and speciation

What is your advice for Basic Medical Sciences students?

When you're trying to understand something really challenging, the first thing I do is remove everything known. I find what's left is always more interesting and where real discovery lies.

What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

I spend most of my time outside of work focusing on my wife and three daughters (ages 7, 11 and 14). We love Mardi Gras, traveling and exploring new things.

faculty spotlight

All alumni classes invited to The Hope Farm during reunion weekend



As part of the USA Medical Alumni Association Reunion, all alumni classes are invited to celebrate at The Hope Farm at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, June 11. Located in Fairhope, [The Hope Farm](#) is a farm-to-table restaurant and wine bar.

To register for reunion weekend, [visit the registration page](#).

If you are unable to attend the entire reunion but still want to join the All Class Celebration at The Hope Farm, [register for this special event here](#).

*The reunion registration fee includes The Hope Farm event, so there is no need to register for both.

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Resident and Fellow Scholarship Exposition abstracts due April 18

The annual USA Resident and Fellow Exposition is an opportunity for residents and fellows to display their scholarly activities from research projects, quality improvement projects, patient safety, education and advocacy projects as well as case reports. This year's exposition will be held in person Thursday, June 16.

Poster categories are:

1. Clinical and Translational Research
2. Quality Improvement, Performance Improvement, Patient Safety, Patient Education, and Patient Advocacy
3. Clinical Vignettes

A \$300 cash prize will be awarded to the winner in each category.



Projects should have been completed since July 1, 2020. Literature reviews and case reports will be considered for the poster competition this year.

Abstract submission deadline is **Monday, April 18**. Access the QR Code for abstract submission forms or visit the [USA Resident and Fellow Scholarship Exposition page](#).

Basic Medical Sciences Elevator Pitch Symposium set for April 14

The USA College of Medicine will host the first Basic Medical Sciences (BMS) Elevator Pitch Symposium Thursday, April 14, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building first-floor auditorium.



The symposium is open to everyone and serves as an approachable way to learn about the research happening in the College of Medicine. Graduate students will present their research in three minutes with only one slide geared toward a general audience.

Student presenters are Takreem Aziz, Abigail Boyd, Alexander Coley, Sage Garriss, Md Ibrahim, Santana Johnson, Rachel Rodenberg, Sirin Saranyutanon, Reece Stevens and Caleb Stratton.

For more information, contact Angie O'Neal at aoneal@southalabama.edu.

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