

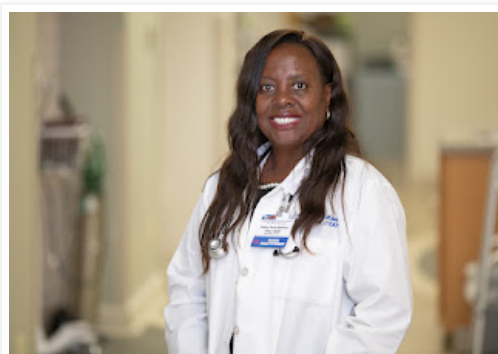
# Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, December 15, 2022

## Sickle Cell Center leadership changes announced

After the recent passing of Johnson Haynes Jr., M.D., Ardie Pack-Mabien, FNP-BC, will lead as the interim director of the Johnson Haynes Jr., M.D., Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center. She has served as a nurse practitioner at the Sickle Cell Center since 1997.



In 2018, she was recognized as the Outstanding Regional Nurse Practitioner for the Bay Area by the Nurse Practitioner Alliance of Alabama. In 2014, she was awarded the USA Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center Outstanding Service and Recognition Award.

Pack-Mabien completed her graduate studies at the University of Mobile and postgraduate studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is available to see patients at the Mastin Patient Care Center and the Strada Patient Care Center.

In addition, Allison Bolton, M.D., and Antwan Hogue, M.D., will serve as collaborating physicians for the Sickle Cell Center to ensure that Haynes' legacy of outstanding outpatient and inpatient care continues.

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## Center for Healthy Communities hosts first professional development forum

The USA Center for Healthy Communities and the Mobile County Health Department held the first Pathways to Purpose Professional Development Forum on Dec. 8, offering continued training opportunities for community health workers (CHWs) certified within the Mobile County Community Health Worker Coalition.

Roma Hanks, Ph.D., director of the Center for Healthy



Communities' Community Health Advocates Program, said the forum was a success. "Professional development activities such as this forum allow CHWs to refresh and expand their skill set, network with their peers, share experiences, learn from each other and grow in their identity as valuable health equity agents in the communities where they practice," said Hanks, who serves as lead for the Center for Healthy Communities' training activities. "Whether it is another pandemic or hurricane, our goal is to have these communities better prepared to meet any of the challenges they may face."

Lynette Parker, research coordinator at the center, said more than two dozen attendees learned about various tools and skills that help them have greater community impact, including understanding the role of zip codes in community work and the importance of community health research for traditionally marginalized communities.

The partnership between the Center for Healthy Communities and the Mobile County Health Department – now in its second year – aims to increase the number of community health workers who will empower struggling communities to build resilience in the event of a disaster. The grant was formed in response to a \$300 million national initiative by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to fund organizations that could bolster local community health worker capacity.

According to Martha Arrieta, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., who serves as interim director of the USA Center for Healthy Communities, community health workers undergo initial training to sharpen their natural skills as leaders and connectors, as well as acquire knowledge and tools that increase their effectiveness in the many roles they will take on. "Such roles include acting as liaisons between community members and the healthcare and social services systems, while also serving as health educators, advocates for individuals and communities, and health outreach agents," she said.

The project is almost to the halfway point of its three-year award period. "To date, the coalition has trained 19 CHWs across 15 varying organizations, including the MCHD and CHC teams as well as 12 faith-based organizations and one private business," Arrieta said.

Antonette Francis-Shearer, Ph.D., who serves as health education manager at the Center for Healthy Communities, said the center has also taken the lead in piloting the clinical integration of CHWs within a multidisciplinary healthcare team, having placed two CHWs to regularly service Stanton Road Clinic, with support from the dedicated management team and staff there.

"Simultaneously, the Mobile County Health Department has expanded its own capacity to train and supervise CHWs," Francis-Shearer said. "Through support of CHWs from organizations that are trusted in the community, MCHD has also worked to expand the reach of the Coalition, resulting in a number of community-based outreach activities."

[View more photos from the event on Flickr.](#)

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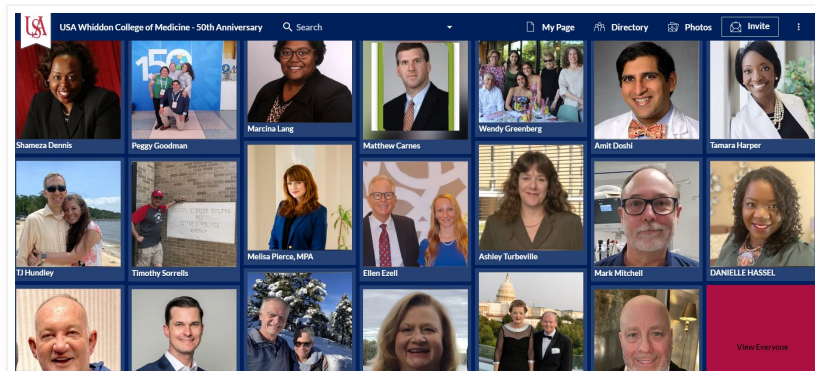
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## Create a page in our 50th anniversary book

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, the USA Medical Alumni Association is calling all alumni, past and current faculty and staff, and past and current residents to create a page in our 50th anniversary celebration book on BrightCrowd.

Visit [southalabama.brightcrowd.com/maa-50th](https://southalabama.brightcrowd.com/maa-50th) to view the book and create your own page.





Wednesday, December 14, 2022

## Meet a Med Student: Yulong Huang

**Yulong Huang**

**Age:** 22

**Class of:** 2026

**Hometown:** Dickson, Tennessee

**Undergraduate institution and degrees earned:** University of South Alabama, B.S. in biomedical sciences and B.A. in philosophy

**What do you enjoy most about being a medical student at the Whiddon College of Medicine?**

I feel incredibly supported and encouraged by my classmates and faculty. The small class size means that I've had the chance to spend time with everyone in my year. We really are a tight-knit community!



**Are you involved in any research, organizations or other initiatives at the College of Medicine?**

I am one of several PEER Supporters and the secretary for Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama (CMMMSA). Over the summer, I co-organized the M1 summer orientation (with Naden Kreitz and our wonderful subcommittees of volunteers) for the class of 2026. Additionally, I volunteer in teaching English classes at Dwell Mobile. As for research, I've recently joined Dr. Thuy Phung's project on melanoma and machine learning in the Department of Pathology.

**What are your interests and hobbies?**

Zumba, walking/hiking, thrift/vintage shopping, playing video games, spoiling my dog

**What is something unique about you?**

I've dyed my hair seven different colors, the more fun ones being blue, purple, orange, pink and rose gold.



## USA grieves loss of Professor Emeritus Frank S. Pettyjohn, M.D.



Frank S. Pettyjohn, M.D., passed away on Dec. 6, 2022, at his home in Gulf Breeze, Florida. An internationally recognized expert in aviation and space medicine, he served on the emergency medicine and internal medicine faculty at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine from 1989 until his retirement in 2017.

A native of Delaware, Pettyjohn graduated from the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering and entered the U.S. Army as a 2nd lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers serving in Korea. Following his return, he received his medical degree from Hahnemann University School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Pettyjohn served in Vietnam as a flight surgeon for the 17th Combat Aviation Group in 1966. On his return, he completed his internal medicine residency and cardiology fellowship at Madigan Army Medical Center in Fort Lewis, Washington. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship in public health/preventive medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle. He also completed a residency in aerospace medicine at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio.

Pettyjohn was a cardiologist and flight surgeon for Operation Homecoming to return Vietnam POWs to the United States in 1973. He joined the U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory at Fort Rucker, Alabama, conducting research in the fields of aeromedical evacuation, oxygen systems, trauma and altitude physiology. He continued his research at the Naval Aeromedical Research Laboratory in Pensacola, Florida.

Upon leaving military service, he joined the Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama in 1989 as professor and founding chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine. He also served as chief of the cardiology division from 2001 to 2008.

Pettyjohn was recalled to the U.S. Army in 1991 as a cardiologist and aviation medicine consultant at the U.S. Army Aeromedical Center during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. He was a member of the aeromedical team that returned POWs from Desert Storm to the United States. In December 2008, he again returned to active duty in the U.S. Army as a flight surgeon and cardiologist with the 345th Combat Support Hospital in Tikrit, Iraq.

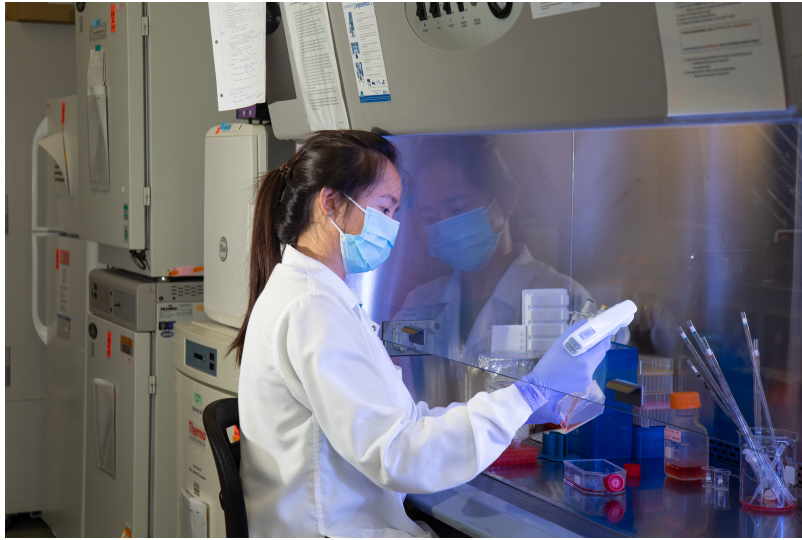
He was board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease, preventive medicine (aerospace medicine) and emergency medicine. He retired as professor emeritus from the University of South Alabama in 2017. Beginning in 2018, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the University of South Alabama Foundation.

Pettyjohn will be laid to rest in a private ceremony with full military honors at Barrancas National Cemetery onboard NAS Pensacola. A celebration to honor his life and military service will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. Jan. 14, 2023, at Felix's Restaurant, 400 Quietwater Beach Road, Pensacola Beach, FL.



Monday, December 12, 2022

## USA scientists win NIH grant to study ticks, leprosy



Natthida Tongluan, a graduate research assistant in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, conducts research in the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases.

Researchers at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama have been awarded a \$423,500 grant from the National Institutes of Health to study the potential for ticks to transmit leprosy.

The research, led by Kevin Macaluso, Ph.D., chair of microbiology and immunology, will make an assessment of leprosy infection and transmission by *Amblyomma* ticks. Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is an infection with *Mycobacterium leprae*, a bacteria found in the southern United States and elsewhere that spreads to animals, mostly armadillos, and people.

"We know from our previous study that ticks have the potential to harbor leprosy," Macaluso said. "The next step will advance the field by attempting to pinpoint the details of transmission."

The researchers at the Whiddon College of Medicine will work in collaboration with the Laboratory Research Branch of National Hansen's Disease Programs in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The researchers' previous study, [published earlier this year in Frontiers in Microbiology](#), suggested that ticks have the potential for transmitting leprosy. They injected ticks in the nymph stage with leprosy and used DNA analysis to conclude that the infection could be maintained in tick-derived cells. Natthida Tongluan, a graduate research assistant in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, was lead author of the paper.

Often considered an ancient disease from biblical times, leprosy is far from eradicated. In 2019, more than 200,000 new cases worldwide were reported to the World Health Organization. Some 150 to 200 new cases are reported each year in the United States, mostly in Florida, California, Louisiana, Hawaii, Texas and New York.

The majority of leprosy patients report that they spend extensive time outdoors but rarely come in contact with armadillos, a known carrier of the disease, or infected people. While researchers have long believed arthropods could play a role, they have not been able to find conclusive evidence to that effect.

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