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

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Bassam presents at the Clinical Neurological Society of America annual meeting

Bassam Bassam, M.D., senior neuromuscular specialist at USA Health, recently presented a lecture, "Acquired Inflammatory Myopathies," at the 49th Annual Meeting of the Clinical Neurological Society of America.

"I am thankful to have been asked to present, yet again, at this meeting," said Bassam, professor of neurology at the Whiddon College of Medicine. "The CNSA pushes neurology-focused medical professionals to improve patient care by providing updates to treatment options and disease pathology."

Currently, Bassam serves as chair of the neuromuscular session and a member of the Scientific Program Committee with the CNSA. He is also organizing the upcoming CNSA 2024 annual meeting.

View his presentation here.

He has also been invited to present at two upcoming events:

- 7th Annual Neuromuscular Seminar at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, on April 15. He will be presenting his lecture, "The Sound of Muscles." Learn more about the seminar here.
- American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodiagnostic Medicine (AANEM) Annual Meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, November 1-4. He will be presenting "Nerve Conduction Pitfalls." Learn more about the annual meeting here.

Bassam has also been nominated by the AANEM for the 2023 Distinguished Physician Award.

Faculty development to explore 'Spirituality and Cultural Competency'

The Office of Faculty Affairs and Development is offering a monthly grand rounds session. Chaplain Kim Crawford Meeks, manager of the spiritual care department at USA Health, will present the topic for April.

Join us as we explore "Spirituality and Cultural Competency" at noon on Friday, April 14, via Zoom. The meeting is approved for 1 hour CME credit.

Register for the session.

Monday, March 20, 2023

Borchert awarded NSF grant to study role of exRNA in maintaining gut health

Glen Borchert, Ph.D., received an $800,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

Glen Borchert, Ph.D., associate professor of pharmacology at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama, is part of a national collaborative research project examining how we control bacteria in the gut.

Borchert was one of 30 principal investigators invited to a National Science Foundation think tank last summer in Airlie, Virginia. While there, he teamed up with six other investigators with diverse and complementary expertise to study gut bacteria. Each member of the group wrote an independent grant covering one aspect of their hypothesis. The NSF recently funded all seven grants associated with the project for a total of $6.5 million.

Borchert, whose research was awarded $800,000 over a four-year period, aims to understand the role of extracellular RNA (exRNA) in communication between

cells and shaping the community of microbes, especially bacteria, that live on and inside humans.

These collections of microbes are often referred to as microbiomes and are critical for the health of plants and animals, including humans. A healthy microbiome promotes a healthy immune system, but how healthy microbiomes are maintained is poorly understood.

“This project will test the hypothesis that RNA secreted by host cells plays a central role in maintaining health by directly regulating genes in the microbiome,” Borchert said. “Understanding how exRNAs shape communication between cells and organisms will enable manipulation of exRNA communication in both agriculture and medicine, potentially leading to new environmentally friendly pesticides, treatments for microbial imbalance in both plants and animals (converting unhealthy microbiomes to healthy ones), and new diagnostic and therapeutic tools for early detection and/or treatment of disease.”