

# Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, March 30, 2023

## Return to Rwanda: Medical students, faculty serve on medical mission



Volunteers from the Whiddon College of Medicine, including 12 senior medical students and several faculty members, traveled to Rwanda for the month of February on a medical mission trip with the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama.

For the first time since the pandemic, a group from the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine and USA Health embarked on a month-long medical mission trip to Rwanda in February.

Led by the Christian Medical Ministry of South Alabama (CMMSA), 12 senior medical students and more than 20 clinical faculty members, residents, advanced practice providers and support personnel served on the mission. The volunteers worked alongside the physicians and staff at Kibogora Hospital, a rural referral hospital in southwest Rwanda.

The hospital is so remote, drones deliver blood products needed for transfusions. During the mission, the team caught the packages of lifesaving blood as the boxes parachuted safely to the ground.

Chris Johnson was among the fourth-year medical students on the trip, which is an elective course for senior medical students. In the absence of an official radiologist, he helped perform and interpret X-rays and ultrasounds – a role he was well prepared for thanks to his upbringing, education and training.

Johnson learned to interpret images from his mother, Leigh Ann Cashwell, M.D., a 2001 graduate of the Whiddon College of Medicine and a practicing radiologist. As

a medical student, he spent three months in USA Health's interventional radiology department with Zeiad Hussain, M.D., assistant professor of radiology. Under Hussain's guidance, he participated in ultrasound-guided biopsies and vascular accesses.

These proved to be useful skills at Kibogora Hospital. One of the hospital's patients had been assaulted and stabbed by attackers with needles, which had broken off in her pelvis and flank. She had three prior surgeries, but they were not able to find all the foreign bodies.

"I went to surgery with her and used ultrasound-guided needle localization to find all the foreign needles. Once I'd find one, they'd prep and use my needle as a guide to remove the foreign object," Johnson explained. "We repeated that until we got them all."

He added, "It was very impactful to truly make a difference in a patient's care and actually be vital to the patient's outcome."

Kasey Grant Andrews, a fourth-year medical student and future pediatrician, served in varying capacities on the trip. For example, she worked in the post-anesthesia care unit, assisted in the minor procedure room, and went on home visits to check on paralyzed patients who were unable to travel to the hospital for regular check-ups.

"As a medical student at the Whiddon College of Medicine, I have learned the value of helping in any manner that is beneficial to the team, which made me very comfortable with switching positions day-to-day," she said. "Additionally, having been exposed to many different hospital settings prepared me to adapt to a setting that was unfamiliar and a group of patients I struggled to communicate with."

Andrews cultivated many relationships on the trip, including one she cherishes with a 3-year-old burn patient and her mother.

"Being an elementary school teacher, her mother spoke English well, which allowed us to communicate throughout her treatment," Andrews said.

"While she was inpatient, I was able to check on her every day; and when she went home, I was still able to participate in dressing changes every other day."

She continues to receive regular updates from the patient's mother via WhatsApp messages.



Chris Johnson uses needle localization on a patient at Kibogora Hospital.



Surgery faculty and residents Harrison Howard, M.D., Alissa Doll, M.D., Elizabeth Lockett, M.D., Victoria Bouillan, M.D., and Lee Grimm, M.D.

Andrews said she models her patient interactions after how USA Health providers treat their patients. "Watching several of the physicians and residents care for patients day in and day out with passion and humility has helped me cultivate how I try to treat each patient regardless of who they are or what brought them to seek care," she said.

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

## OB-GYN Interest Group to host book club discussion

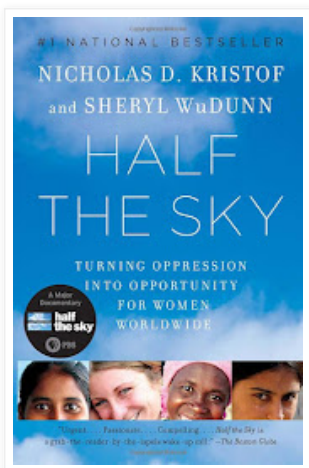
The OB-GYN Interest Group, in partnership with Jags Against Trafficking and the American Medical Women's Association, will present the inaugural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Book Club. A book discussion will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 5, in the Atlantis Room (behind USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital).

The book is "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide" by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. It is available for free on cloudLibrary of the Mobile Public Library System. Heather Glass also has copies available for checkout.

Anyone interested in reading and participating in or observing thoughtful conversations on worldwide health disparities and themes highlighted in "Half the Sky" is invited to attend. Resident physician Sara Anne Stringfellow, M.D., and medical student Rennan Zaharias will be the discussants.

The group plans to host the book club quarterly in the months of February, April, August and November.

Food will be provided. [RSVP here](#).



## SRFC to provide colorectal cancer screenings March 31



The Student-Run Free Clinic and Oncology Interest Group will host a free colorectal cancer screening on Friday, March 31, from 2:30 to 5 p.m. at the Student-Run Free Clinic, located at the Salvation Army, 1009 Dauphin St.

The screening will be preceded by a patient education session on the importance of colon cancer screenings. Patient education will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. at the SRFC.

Volunteers who are interested in helping with the patient education session or clinic can [sign up on the Google sheet](#).