

Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, February 1, 2024

New pediatric surgeon joins Whiddon COM faculty

Tuan Hoai Pham, M.D., Ph.D., FACS, FAAP, a leader in pediatric surgery, recently joined the staff at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. He also serves as an associate professor of surgery and pediatrics at the Whiddon College of Medicine.

A double-board-certified pediatric surgeon, Pham brings more than 20 years of experience providing comprehensive general and thoracic surgical care for children to USA Health, including performing neonatal and pediatric oncology surgeries.



"We are thrilled to have Dr. Pham join USA Health," said William O. Richards, M.D., F.A.C.S., professor and chair of surgery at the Whiddon College of Medicine and director of the USA Surgical Weight Loss Center. "His wide range of experience – which includes decades of performing neonatal and pediatric oncology surgeries – is a great fit for the specialty services we provide to patients on the upper Gulf Coast."

Previously, Pham was medical director of pediatric surgery at Beacon Children's Hospital in South Bend, Indiana.

"My goal is to provide safe, evidence-based, full spectrum pediatric surgical options with compassion and in collaboration with other pediatric specialists," Pham said. "I'm also an advocate for using the most minimally invasive surgical procedures available to give my patients the most successful outcomes."

Children's & Women's Hospital includes the only level III neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in the region, offering the highest level of care for premature infants. Inside the NICU, a multidisciplinary team also cares for extremely premature infants in a small baby unit.

Pham earned a medical degree from the University of California in Irvine, California. He completed a residency in general surgery at the Mayo Clinic Rochester in Rochester, Minnesota, and a fellowship in pediatric surgery from the University of British Columbia Children's Hospital in Vancouver, Canada. Pham is certified by the American Board of Surgery in pediatric surgery and general surgery.

He received numerous research awards during his Ph.D. and postdoctoral training including a National Institute of Health Medicinal Scientist Training Fellowship, Whitaker Biomedical Engineering Fellowship and the Fulbright Scholarship in

Sweden. His research earned recognition with Children and Family Research Fellow Awards from BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia.

He is a member of several professional groups, including the American College of Surgeons, American Association of Pediatrics, American Pediatric Surgeons Association, Pacific Association of Pediatric Surgeons, Canadian Association of Pediatric Surgeons, the British Association of Pediatric Surgeons and the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:45AM](#)



Meet a Med Student: Cade Smelley

Cade Smelley

Age: 23

Class: 2025

Hometown: Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Undergraduate education: B.S. in biology and philosophy, University of South Alabama

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

The Whiddon College of Medicine has provided many opportunities to get involved in research, to volunteer and shadow, and to experience an array of different medical specialties while retaining the camaraderie and hospitality provided by a smaller class size.

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

I have worked on a project with Dr. Tyler McDonald regarding patient-reported outcomes in pediatric fracture care. I enjoy attending the Orthopaedic Surgery Interest Group and Bioethics Club meetings and volunteering at the Student-Run Free Clinic.

What are your interests and hobbies?

I love playing the drums and listening to music, playing chess, working out at the rec center, watching movies, and hanging out with friends.

What is something unique about you?

I was voted "most likely to be seen air drumming" during high school.



Posted by Med School Watercooler at [10:15AM](#)



USA scientists explore role of MYB transcription factors in cancer



Shashi Anand, Ph.D., a postdoctoral researcher in pathology, is studying the role of MYB proteins in cancer. His research was recently published in the scientific journal *Cancer and Metastasis Reviews*.

Researchers at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute and the Whiddon College of Medicine are exploring the roles of proteins called MYB transcription factors in human malignancies. Their recently published research highlights MYB proteins as emerging therapeutic targets and useful biomarkers to predict cancer aggressiveness and response to various types of therapies.

“MYB transcription factors are proteins that regulate the expression of several key genes that make cancer cells grow faster, avoid death even in harsh environmental conditions, and make them invade through the extracellular matrix, facilitating their spread to other organs,” said Shashi Anand, Ph.D., lead author of the article.

Anand is a postdoctoral research fellow who works in the lab of Ajay Singh, Ph.D., a professor of pathology at the Whiddon College of Medicine and leader of the Cancer Biology Program at the Mitchell Cancer Institute.

Their research was published in *Cancer and Metastasis Reviews*, a high-impact journal that publishes reviews on recent developments in the biology and treatment of malignant disease and highlights promising new directions.

Singh’s lab heavily focuses on MYB, and scientists have identified its roles and expression patterns in multiple types of malignancies. The new knowledge detailed in the article could be highly useful to develop new approaches for therapeutic targeting of cancer-supporting MYB functions and enhancement of existing treatment modalities.

“Besides summarizing existing literature and providing a critical discussion, we also intended to identify gaps in our knowledge to serve as guidance for future research directions,” said Singh, who is the senior author of the study. “This article should also serve as an educational resource for students and early-career researchers to build a foundational understanding.”

Additional authors from the Mitchell Cancer Institute and the Whiddon College of Medicine, Department of Pathology, are Kunwar Somesh Vikramdeo, Ph.D;



Research on MYB is conducted in the lab of Ajay Singh, Ph.D., who is the senior author of the study.

Sarabjeet Kour Sudan, Ph.D.; Amod Sharma, Ph.D.; Srijan Acharya, Ph.D.;
Mohammad Aslam Khan, Ph.D.; and Seema Singh, Ph.D.

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Read the full article in [Cancer and Metastasis Reviews](#).