

# Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, May 2, 2024

## GME coordinators establish wellness committee to address stress and burnout



GME coordinators gathered at Taco Mama before Match Day and onboarding season.

While stress and burnout are common among medical students, residents and fellows, internal medicine graduate medical education (GME) program coordinators at USA Health say that extends to their roles as well.

Various research backs it up. Multiple studies cited in publications such as the Journal of Graduate Medical Education indicate that, nationally, most GME coordinators

are overwhelmed and overworked.

Since 2017, wellness has been part of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Common Program Requirements, a basic set of standards in training and preparing resident and fellow physicians, but the emphasis on psychological, emotional, and physical well-being seems to be neglected when it comes to the program coordinators.

In response, Brant Weindorf and Kim Eardley, GME coordinators in the Department of Internal Medicine, have started the Program Coordinators Advocating for Wellness (PCAW), a committee dedicated to improving well-being and providing support for their peers. Both will serve as co-chairs of the committee.



"Our role as program coordinators has evolved so much in the last few years that it can easily become overwhelming and stressful. PCAW has the ability to bridge the gap between specialties and connect coordinators together outside of work," Weindorf said. "No one understands the effort that goes into this job quite like other coordinators!"

The committee's first event, Margaritas Before Match, welcomed all coordinators to socialize at Taco Mama in Midtown to celebrate each other and prepare for onboarding season.

"Our debut event was a promising sign of how much a committee like this is needed on campus," he said. "I'm very excited to have created and co-chair this committee with Kim, and together use our talents to shape the well-being of program coordinators at USA Health."

Eardley said they sensed the need to improve, educate, and advocate for the well-being of program coordinators through wellness-focused activities and events throughout the year.

Proposed activities include social events, physical wellness challenges and education, professional development sessions, and volunteer opportunities in the health system.

"Through PCAW, we have the potential to benefit both program coordinators and graduate medical education by promoting healthier lifestyles, increasing productivity, enhancing coordinator engagement, and fostering a positive work environment," Eardley said. "It is truly about the atmosphere, teamwork, and the desire to succeed together. It is time to finally give stress the day off!"

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 2:05 PM



## Ramani selected as CMO for Children's & Women's Hospital

Manimaran (Maran) Ramani, M.D., has been appointed to a new role as chief medical officer (CMO) of USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. He currently serves as the division chief of neonatology and medical director for the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), and he will continue in these roles. In this new position, he joins the CMO team for USA Health led by system CMO Michael Chang, M.D., FACS.

This appointment marks an important milestone, as up to now, Children's & Women's Hospital has not had a physician executive serving in the CMO role exclusively for the facility. In the position, Ramani will work to better optimize quality, safety, efficiency, and patient-centeredness across the scope of care for children and women.

"In the time he's been here, Dr. Ramani has demonstrated that he clearly possesses the skillset to be highly effective working with physicians in both the pediatric and women's health spaces," said Chang. "The members of the CMO team across USA Health are in a position to serve as physician partners to our



Maran Ramani, M.D.

hospital CEOs to help manage the explosive growth within USA Health, and he's remarkably equipped to do that."

"I am looking forward to working with the incredible team of providers and healthcare staff at Children's & Women's Hospital, who are striving every day to provide the highest quality of care," said Ramani, who is also a professor of pediatrics at the Whiddon College of Medicine. "I will work hard to identify and remove barriers and challenges our team faces in delivering high-quality healthcare to women and children in our community."

Ramani is board certified in general pediatrics and neonatal-perinatal medicine by the American Board of Pediatrics. He completed a fellowship in neonatology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and a pediatric residency at Texas Tech Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, Texas.

In addition to medical training, Ramani earned master's degrees in healthcare administration (M.S.H.A.) and hospital quality and safety (M.S.H.Q.S.) from UAB. His experience includes expertise in strategic planning, operational management, people management, healthcare policy, finance, patient quality, and safety. His research interests include global health and neurodevelopmental outcomes of prematurity and birth asphyxia. Previously, he was the associate fellowship program director for the Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Fellowship and director of the neonatal neuro intensive care unit at UAB.

In July 2022, Ramani was awarded a three-year grant from The Thrasher Research Foundation to conduct a multinational clinical study, known as the Azithromycin Brain neuroprotection for Children (ABC) study, to determine whether a single oral dose of the antibiotic azithromycin can be repurposed to have neuroprotective benefits for infants who suffer a lack of oxygen to the brain before or during birth. The study is ongoing in five countries: India, Pakistan, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Guatemala. Through the grant, Ramani is working with a team of physicians and scientists from those countries to improve the health outcomes for infants born in low-resources settings.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [1:39 PM](#)



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## Six students earn travel scholarships for state pediatrics meeting



Medical students, from left, Hope Lund, Emily Cleveland, Sarah Jackson, Justine Magadia, Kahlea Haladwala and Kara Nix attend the Alabama Chapter of the AAP meeting.

With a goal of learning more about careers in pediatrics, six medical students recently received travel scholarships to attend the spring meeting of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics held in April in Gulf Shores.

The Whiddon College of Medicine students, in their third year of training, included Hope Lund, Emily Cleveland, Sarah Jackson, Justine Magadia, Kahlea Haladwala and Kara Nix.

Benjamin Estrada, M.D., a pediatric infectious diseases physician who is professor and vice chair of pediatrics for the Whiddon College of Medicine, said the students were selected to receive scholarships based on their academic performance, interest in pediatrics, and future career choices.

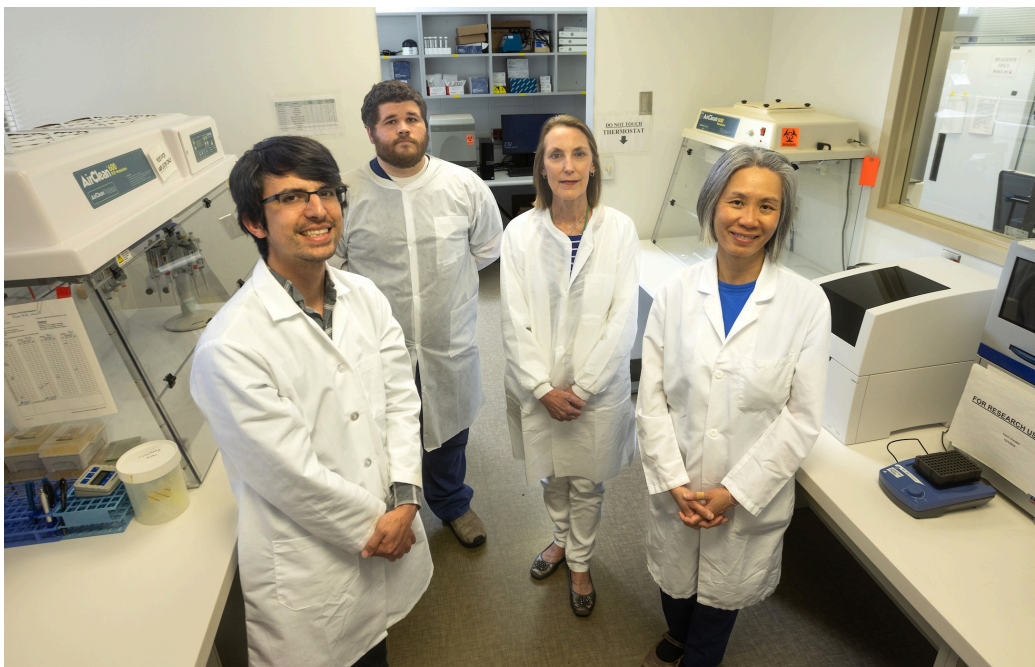
During the two-day meeting, students enhanced their knowledge in clinical aspects of pediatrics and health issues affecting children in Alabama. In addition, they were able to network with other medical students and pediatricians within the state.

The Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is the only statewide member organization of pediatricians, with 850 members, representing both academic and community pediatrics. The organization is operated by a volunteer board of directors and executive staff in Montgomery.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [12:56 PM](#)



## Molecular lab launches genomic testing for personalized cancer care



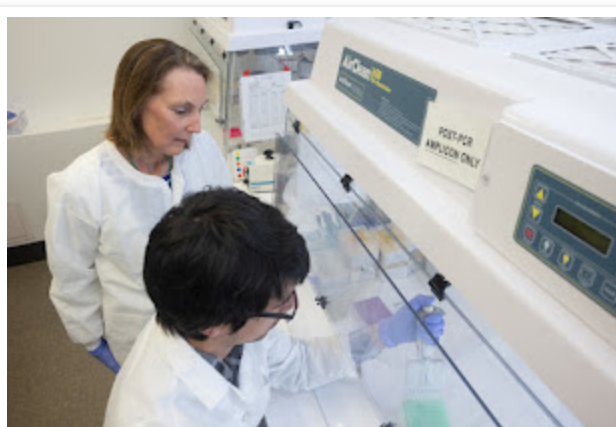
Members of the molecular diagnostic lab, from left, Doug Hebert, Ph.D., John Larrimore, Kathryn Navia, and Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D., worked to launch a new genomic oncology test.

USA Health's molecular diagnostic laboratory recently launched a genomic test for cancer patients that allows oncologists to tailor treatments based on the specific gene mutations in their patients' tumors.

After a patient's tumor is biopsied, the tissue sample is tested in the molecular diagnostic lab to determine which type of pathogenic gene mutation is present in the cancer. Processing the tissue samples in house means patients receive results more quickly and can start the appropriate treatment earlier than if the tissue samples were sent to an outside laboratory. For patients with aggressive cancers, starting treatment quickly is key to achieving the best possible outcomes.

"This is precision medicine," said Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D., director of molecular genetic pathology and dermatopathology at USA Health. "We employ state-of-the-art, next-generation sequencing technology to determine what type of mutation the cancer has, so oncologists can determine the best course of action."

The test – called the OncSeq Solid Tumor NGS Assay – detects genomic alterations in solid tumor samples and evaluates the mutation status of tumor DNA in about 40 well-known cancer-associated genes simultaneously. This assay focuses on gene mutations that can be addressed by current FDA-approved cancer therapies and detects indications for solid tumors, such as non-small cell lung cancer, gastrointestinal stromal tumor, melanoma, pancreatic, colorectal, endometrial and brain tumors.



Kathy Navia, a pathology medical technologist, and Doug Hebert, Ph.D., a pathology molecular medical scientist, run a test in the molecular lab.

Phung, who also is a professor of pathology at the Whiddon College of Medicine, led the project. In addition to starting appropriate cancer treatment sooner, Phung said it is significant that USA Health as an academic health system has the capability to perform genomic testing in our own lab.

“When we send the tissue to an outside lab, we don’t have access to the data – the genetic sequence,” she said. “This information is very important for retrospective and prospective research and education.”

Phung credits the support of John Marymont, M.D., MBA, dean of the Whiddon College of Medicine; and Guillermo Herrera, M.D., chair of the Department of Pathology; as well as members of the molecular lab, John Larrimore, Kathy Navia, and Doug Hebert, Ph.D., for making this achievement possible.

For more information about the new test and ordering, contact the lab at [molecularlab@health.southalabama.edu](mailto:molecularlab@health.southalabama.edu).

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 9:56 AM

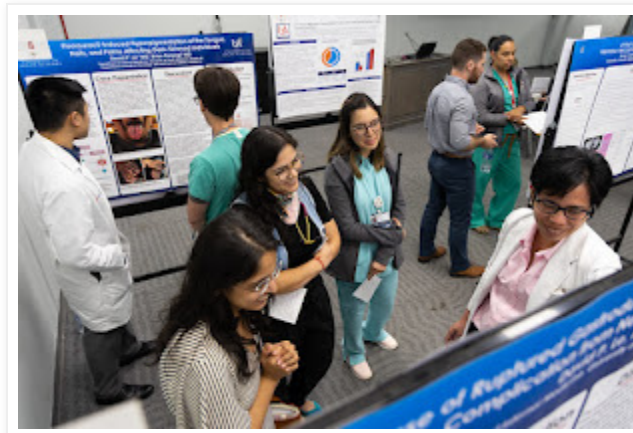


**Monday, April 29, 2024**

## Resident and Fellow Academic Expo set for May 1

The 2024 USA Resident and Fellow Academic Exposition will take place on Wednesday, May 1, from 2 to 4:30 p.m. in the Strada Patient Care Center Conference Room.

This 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 expo will feature a poster presentation competition and an oral presentation competition. Faculty, staff, residents, fellows and family are invited to attend.

The winners will receive cash prizes.

For details, visit the [USA Resident and Fellow Academic Exposition page](#).