Med School Watercooler

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

Thursday, June 27, 2024

Turbeville retires from Whiddon College of Medicine

Ashley Turbeville, MBA, executive director of research administration and development, is retiring from the Whiddon College of Medicine.

After 31 years of service to the University of South Alabama, Ashley Turbeville, MBA, is retiring from the Whiddon College of Medicine. June 30 is her official last day.

Turbeville started her tenure at the College of Medicine as a word processing specialist in radiology before taking a secretary V position in the cell biology and neuroscience department. From there, she moved to the sponsored projects office at USA as an administrative assistant. During that time, she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. She was promoted to the assistant director and then the associate director of grants administration.

In 2007, she returned to the College of Medicine as director of the research office and was later promoted to her most recent position as executive director of research administration and development.

"When I started at USA 31 years ago, I never dreamed I would have completed two degree programs and be in this position today," she said. "The COM and USA as a whole have been very good to me."

Turbeville said she is proud to have worked with faculty and staff to submit grants for many successful research, public service and instruction projects over the years.

"These projects helped people in our community, and great research was completed that laid the groundwork for some translational studies," she said. "When you have a faculty member and their lab discover something novel like a

biomarker or a protein-coding gene while doing the research you helped them submit to the sponsor is an awesome feeling."

Turbeville said she looks forward to spending more time with her family and tackling a small list of projects. But, after devoting three decades of her professional life to the university, retirement is bittersweet.

"I have worked with some of the brightest and smartest faculty and staff. These people are my work family, and they will be missed." she said. "I have been blessed to have played a small part in the research mission and the educational mission of the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine."

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 10:41 AM

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

USA Medical Alumni Association hosts reunion weekend

Alumni gathered at The Lodge in Gulf Shores for the 2024 USA MAA Reunion Weekend.

More than 100 alumni and friends of the Whiddon College of Medicine attended the 2024 USA Medical Alumni Association Reunion Weekend. The event was held June 21-23 at The Lodge in Gulf Shores, Alabama.

This year marked the return to the traditional five-year anniversary cycle, honoring the medical classes of 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019. One of the highlights of this year's reunion was the reintroduction of the annual Medical Alumni and Leadership Awards at the MAA Awards Luncheon on Saturday, June 22. The USA Medical Alumni Association was proud to present the following recipients with their respective awards:

S. Lane Rutledge, M.D., '81
2024 Distinguished Medical Alumni Memorial Award

Daniel C. Potts, M.D., F.A.A.N., '93
2024 Distinguished Medical Alumni Award

Robert W. Chagrasulis, M.D., ’81
2024 Medical Alumni Humanitarian Award

Jonathan G. Scammell, Ph.D.
2024 Distinguished Service Award

Robert D. Lightfoot, M.D.
The de Juan, Chambers, Oppenheimer Healthcare Award

Dean Emeritus Sam Strada, Ph.D., left, presents Daniel Potts, M.D., with the Distinguished Medical Alumni Award.

Speakers for the weekend included T.J. Hundley, M.D., ’04; Michael Ledet, M.D., ’84; Elizabeth VandeWaa, Ph.D.; and Mark Williams, M.D., M.B.A., J.D., C.P.E., ’80. Presentation topics ranged from the business of medicine and updates in medical education to safe opioid prescribing.

Make plans to join us for next year's Medical Alumni Reunion Weekend, June 13-15, 2025, at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama, where we will honor classes ending in 5 and 0.

View more photos from the reunion on Flickr.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 2:59 PM

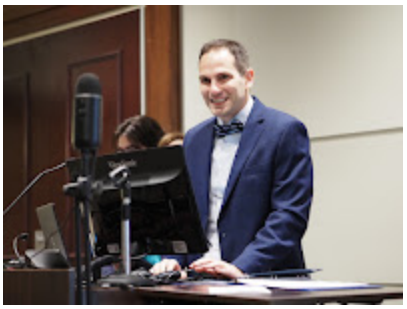
Tuesday, June 25, 2024

Internal medicine graduates and residents honored

Internal medicine faculty and third-year residents attend the department's annual awards banquet.

The USA Health Department of Internal Medicine recently hosted its graduation and annual awards banquet during which its interns, residents and fellows were recognized, and various awards were presented.

Nasser Lakkis, M.Sc.-M.D., FACC, professor and chair of internal medicine, and Judy Blair-Elortegui, M.D., director of the internal medicine residency program and associate professor of internal medicine, recognized the following physicians:



Anas Khouri, M.D.

Fares Hujier, M.D., a hospitalist and assistant professor of internal medicine, received the John Bass Award for Excellence in Teaching as the attending physician interns and residents deemed as the most instrumental in enriching the academic experience.

Haris Manan, M.D., a rising third-year resident, was presented the Les Sockwell Award, named for a senior resident in the combined Medicine/Pediatrics program who passed away in a car accident in 2003. It honors Sockwell’s humanitarian nature and compassion for others. Residents at any level of training are eligible to be considered for the award.

Manan also received the Samuel Eichold Award in recognition of his community service activities that he has led for fellow residents and his ongoing support for the residency community in numerous ways.

Anas Khouri, M.D., a graduate of the program, was given the P.D. McGehee Award for his excellence in scholarly writing.

Khouri also received the Victor Benator Award, which is named for a resident who died from injuries sustained in a car accident in 1977. Benator was best known for his ability to lead by example and his avid desire to teach, so this honor is

given in recognition of personal and professional excellence with special emphasis on teaching.


Garrett Reid McClenny, M.D.

Garrett Reid McClenny, M.D., another graduate, was presented the John C. Schultz Award in honor of its namesake's dedication to medical scholarship and pursuit of lifelong education. McClenny was selected by program leadership for his conference attendance and participation in learning activities.

Additional awards presented include:

Department Awards

Outstanding Support Award
Brian Hulon
Digital health audio/visual specialist, Whiddon College of Medicine

Best Clinical Teacher Award
Philip Almalouf, M.D.
Pulmonologist and assistant professor of internal medicine

Best Resident Advocate Award
Yun Coronado, M.D.
Hospitalist and assistant professor of internal medicine

Best Professional Role Model Award
Fares Hujier, M.D.
Hospitalist and assistant professor of internal medicine

Subspecialty Attending of the Year Award
Emad Al Jaber, M.D.
Nephrologist and assistant professor of internal medicine

Intern of the Year Awards

Preliminary Intern of the Year
Sarah Fillingim, M.D.

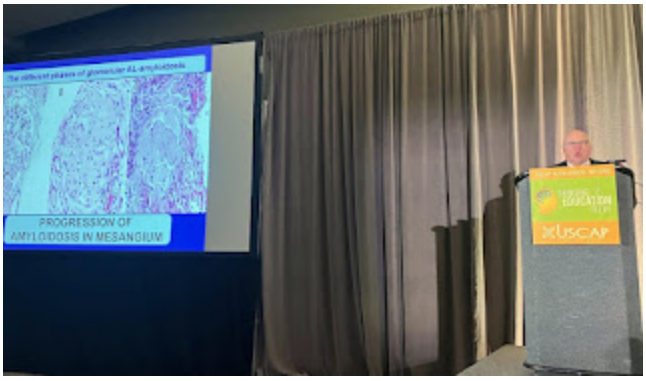
Categorical Intern of the Year
Garrett Tobin, M.D.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at 1:03 PM

Monday, June 24, 2024

Pathology faculty present amyloidosis research at international meetings

Guillermo Herrera, M.D., professor and chair of pathology at the Whiddon College of Medicine, and Luis del Pozo-Yauner, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pathology, recently presented their research on amyloidosis to international experts in the field.



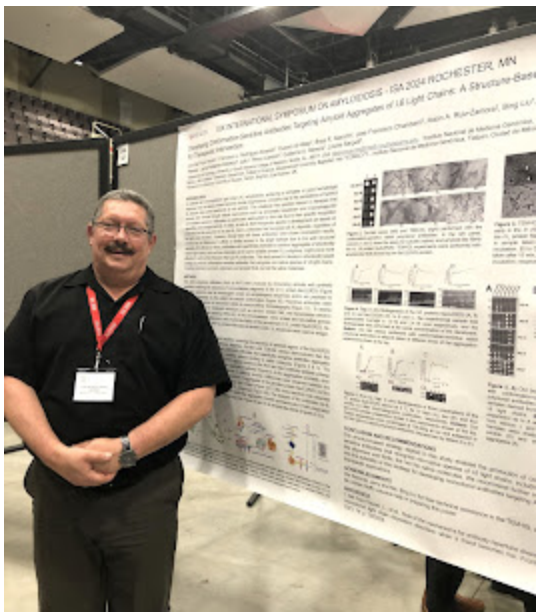
Guillermo Herrera, M.D., gives a talk on renal AL amyloidosis.

They shared key findings from their research at the joint XIX International Symposium on Amyloidosis and the International Kidney & Monoclonal Gammopathy Research Group's annual meeting, both held in Rochester, Minnesota. The events featured oral presentations and poster sessions highlighting scientific advancements in understanding the causes of amyloidosis and the most effective strategies for diagnosis, prognosis and treatment.

Amyloidosis is a condition in which abnormal proteins called amyloids build up in organs and tissues, disrupting their function. This pathogenic phenomenon is shared by a growing list of diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, type II diabetes mellitus, and light chain-derived (AL) amyloidosis.

"The symposium provided an invaluable opportunity to learn from the most reputable experts about advances in translational and clinical research on the molecular basis of amyloid aggregation and its impact on the group of diseases known as amyloidosis," del Pozo-Yauner said.

Herrera presented a talk on the SORL1 receptor, which was identified in his lab a few years ago. SORL1 plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis and progression of renal AL amyloidosis, Herrera said. In particular, it affects renal mesangial cells, which are cells in the kidneys that help filter blood and remove waste products. Understanding the role of SORL1 could potentially lead to new treatments or strategies to prevent the buildup of these harmful proteins in the kidneys.


Luis del Pozo-Yauner, M.D., Ph.D., presents his research at the XIX International Symposium on Amyloidosis.

Del Pozo-Yauner presented research on developing conformation-sensitive antibodies for diagnosing and treating AL amyloidosis. Current treatments aim to eliminate the plasma cell clone responsible for producing amyloidogenic light chains, but some patients still suffer organ damage from existing AL deposits.

"Therefore, there is growing interest in therapies aimed at removing AL deposits by enhancing physiological mechanisms such as enzymatic degradation, cellular uptake, and clearance by specialized macrophage-like cells," del Pozo-Yauner said. "Antibodies are ideal for this purpose due to their unique recognition properties and biological functions."

The research team’s approach involves creating antibodies specific to structurally similar light chains within the same subgroup, rather than broadly targeting all AL types. This method shows potential for developing subgroup-specific antibodies with therapeutic benefits against AL amyloidosis, offering new avenues for improved treatment strategies.

In addition to Herrera and del Pozo-Yauner, Elba A. Turbat-Herrera, M.D., professor of pathology and interdisciplinary clinical oncology; Jiamin Teng, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of pathology; Chung Zeng, research associate; and Bing Liu, electron microscopy specialist, contributed to the research.