

# Med School Watercooler

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

Wednesday, July 3, 2024

## Whiddon COM faculty received promotion and awarded tenure

In recognition of their excellence in scholarship, teaching and service, Whiddon College of Medicine faculty received approval for promotion and were awarded tenure at the USA Board of Trustees meeting on June 7. New academic ranks will be effective Aug. 15.

Join us in congratulating these faculty members for their outstanding achievements.



### Tenure:

- Amy R. Nelson, Ph.D.

### Promotion to Professor:

- Judy V. Blair Elortegui, M.D.
- Haidee T. Custodio, M.D.
- Jacek M. Polski, M.D.
- Jeffrey S. Sosnowski, M.D., Ph.D.

### Promotion to Associate Professor:

- Emad Al Jaber, M.D.
- Stephanie J. Anderson, M.D.
- Andrew C. Bright, D.O.
- Charles Caleb Butts, M.D.
- Kalsang Dolma, M.D.
- Osama R. Elkadi, M.D.

- Phillip K. Henderson, D.O.
- Amelia R. Hewes, M.D.
- William A. Kilgo, M.D.
- Kurt J. Knowles, M.D.
- Raymond J. Langley, Ph.D.
- Preethi R. Marri, M.D.
- Amy R. Nelson, Ph.D.

Promotion to Adjunct Professor:

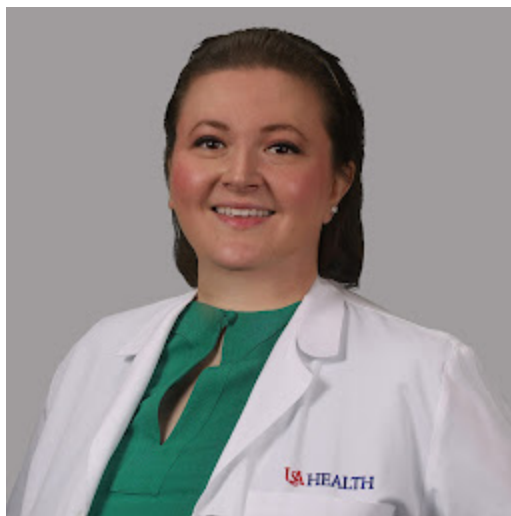
- Allison Chung, Pharm.D.
- Elly Trepman, M.D.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:09 PM](#)



## USA awarded grant to study race-based disparities in autism care

Sara Garcia Shank, M.D., a developmental and behavioral pediatrician with USA Health Pediatrics and an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Whiddon College of Medicine, will serve as a co-primary investigator for an internal research grant with colleagues from the University of South Alabama. Jordan Albright, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at USA, will serve as primary investigator.



Sara Garcia Shank, M.D.

The group recently was awarded \$9,908 in funding for its application to use a community-partnered approach to understanding and addressing race-based autism diagnostic disparities in Mobile for USA's Social Justice Research Initiative.

"The focus of the project is examining racial health disparities in our local community regarding an autism diagnosis," Shank said. "This will help us better understand why many of our patients have barriers to care."

Other grant recipients from USA are Meredith Tittler, Ph.D., assistant professor in counseling and instructional sciences, and London Bowers, a graduate research assistant.

Research shows the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased dramatically in recent decades, with current rates reported at 1 in 54 U.S. children. While behavioral symptoms of ASD have been detected in children between 12 and 14 months of age, parents wait three years on average between when they first express concerns and when their child receives a diagnosis. The

delay is often more pronounced with children from lower-income households, racial minority groups, and rural backgrounds, data shows.

Early identification and intervention for autistic children are critical to improving outcomes.

This grant, Shank said, will support the investigation of issues regarding social justice in the following areas: social stratification, health disparities, environmental justice, and racial equity. A qualitative study will focus on local racial and cultural barriers and the facilitators seeking an autism diagnosis in Mobile, with the goal of developing a toolkit for overcoming these barriers in partnership with the community.

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [12:22 PM](#)



## USA neurosurgery selected as site for national joint fusion study



Richard Menger, M.D., MPA

The USA Health Department of Neurosurgery has been selected as one of seven sites nationwide to participate in a study to collect data on the safety, performance and effectiveness of an innovative medical device in patients who have spinal fusion surgery with pelvic fixation/fusion.

The iFuse Bedrock Granite Implant System is intended to be used for sacroiliac (SI) joint fusion to

address dysfunction, fractures, degenerative disc disease, spondylolisthesis, trauma, deformities or curvatures of the spine, or a failed previous fusion, among other conditions.

The system, according to Richard Menger, M.D., MPA, a USA Health neurosurgeon and the chief of complex spine surgery, can offer positive benefits to patients.

"This is the leading edge of spinal deformity surgery. Typical lumbo-pelvic fusion involved instrumentation links the spine to the pelvis for stability, but this allows an actual fusion of the joint between the last part of the spine and the pelvis," said Menger, who also is an associate professor of neurosurgery in the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine. "This new technology has the significant potential to reduce pain and to make complex surgery safer."

The study, Pelvic Fixation and Fusion During Multilevel Spinal Surgery, is a multicenter, open label, single-arm observational clinical study consisting of prospective and retrospective study cohorts across select centers in the United States.

Menger praised the collaborative effort with Stefanie White and Valerie Patterson, both of whom work with clinical trials, and Nate Stuck, a physician assistant in

the Department of Neurosurgery. "It's great to have that level of experience and knowledge here at USA," he said.

"Our participation illustrates USA's growing academic footprint regionally and nationally," Menger said. "Academic medicine can have a tremendous impact on the delivery of care. Our entire group of surgeons attend scientific conferences, present at scientific conferences, and now we are partnering with leading technology development to best help our patients and push the field forward."

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [12:20 PM](#)



## Urology conference abstract submissions due Aug. 30

The Alabama Urology Network 2024 Conference, set for Oct. 4-6 at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach, Alabama, will feature a resident/medical student poster contest. Residents and students interested in participating are asked to coordinate with a faculty member in preparing a poster for the meeting. This is an easy way to build an academic portfolio.



Posters will be judged at the conference and awards given to the highest-ranking posters. Abstracts should be submitted via the Google form. The deadline for abstract submission is Aug. 30.

All poster presenters must register for the conference. Register online or print a form from the Alabama Urology Network page. Registration is free for residents and students.

Accommodations for the Perdido Beach Resort, 27200 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach, can be made by calling 800-634-8001 with Booking ID #20631 or book online. The room block rates begin at \$245 per night and expire Sept. 12.

For more information, email [cmorris@alamedical.org](mailto:cmorris@alamedical.org).

