

Med School Watercooler

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

Friday, April 23, 2010

Dr. Anne Cross to Present Lectures on Multiple Sclerosis



Dr. Anne H. Cross, professor of neurology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo., will present a series of one-hour lectures to physicians, residents and students from April 28 to 29 as a part of the American Neurological Association John Whitaker Visiting Professorship.

Her lecture series will elaborate on new findings in the treatment and understanding of multiple sclerosis (MS). According to the CDC, MS is a disease of the central nervous system that is characterized by the destruction of the myelin sheath surrounding neurons. MS is a progressive and fluctuating disease that is three times more common in women than in men, and the cause of MS is unknown.

The first lecture, titled "Close Horizons: New Treatments for MS," will take place on April 28 at 9 a.m. in the second floor conference room at the University of South Alabama Medical Center.

Dr. Cross' second lecture, titled "B Cells and MS: Rationale for Depletion in MS Patients and Results of Trials," will be at 11 a.m. on April 28 in the USA Department of Neurology at Med Park 3.

Her third lecture, titled "Pathogenesis of MS: An Update," will be on April 29 at 8 a.m. in the second floor conference room at the University of South Alabama Medical Center.

The goal of Dr. Cross' current efforts is to understand the mechanisms involved in pathogenesis of inflammation and demyelination in the brain and spinal cord. She is currently studying antibodies to myelin constituents and B cells in experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE) and in MS; mechanisms of cytokine regulation in MS; and how to develop imaging techniques to identify demyelination versus axonal loss in the CNS of animals and patients. She is also involved in a Phase II trial of B cell depletion in MS patients that are not optimally treated with standard agents.

Dr. Cross is originally from the Mobile region. She graduated summa cum laude in 1976 with a B.S. in Chemistry from the University of South Alabama and cum laude with medical degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1980. For more than 17 years, Dr. Cross has performed important research and has educated students and residents.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:57PM](#) 1 comment:

USA Awarded \$7.5 Million Grant To Lead Alabama's Effort To Improve Health Care Through Electronic

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Medical Records



The University of South Alabama has been awarded a \$7.5 million grant to lead Alabama in a nationwide effort to improve health care through electronic health record systems.

The competitive grant awarded to the Center for Strategic Health Innovation in USA's College of Medicine is one of the largest in the University's history. It will help primary care providers in Alabama transition to electronic health record systems as part of a national initiative to improve health care efficiency and patient outcomes.

USA is one of 60 nonprofit organizations selected nationwide by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to receive the Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center award. The grant is

administered through the HHS's Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the four-year grant establishes the Alabama Regional Extension Center, or ALREC, a consortium of partners led by USA that includes the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Alabama Medicaid Agency, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, Alabama Primary Healthcare Association, Childersburg Area Rural Health Network, and the JHD Group.

According to the grant's principal investigator, Dr. Dan Roach, ALREC aims to improve the quality of health care in the state by providing primary care physicians and other health care practitioners with community-based technical assistance, guidance and information on best practices as the nation makes the switch to an electronic health records system.

"This new Regional Extension Center at USA will help facilitate the process of moving health care providers away from the use of paper patient records to electronic records, which enables physicians to have more rapid access to patient information and ultimately improve the quality of patient care," said Roach, who is also a physician and director of medical informatics in the Center for Strategic Health Innovation.

The grant is part of a \$2 billion effort by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to achieve what the HHS describes as "widespread, meaningful use of health information technology." The Regional Extension Center, or REC, grants are part of an overall blueprint by HHS to move virtually all health care providers to an electronic age.

Working to help the nation achieve this goal, ALREC will collaborate with other RECs throughout the United States to provide outreach and support services to at least 100,000 priority primary care providers over the next two years.

The focus of the new centers is to familiarize physicians with the opportunity to move from paper to digital records, assist physicians in the selection of the appropriate electronic health record for their practices, and provide the training and support for them to use that electronic health record in a way that directly benefits patient care.

"The University of South Alabama has long been committed to improving the health of our citizens by educating physicians and health care professionals, conducting medical research and treating patients through our hospitals and physician practice, so it is gratifying that USA is now able to play a lead role in the national initiative toward better management of medical records, which will enhance health care and enable countless people to live longer, healthier lives," said USA President Gordon Moulton.

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The new grant fits well with one of the Center for Strategic Health Innovation's principal missions, which is to lead innovation and research into patient-centric health care technologies.

Dr. Samuel Strada, dean of USA's College of Medicine, said the REC award signals the College of Medicine's growing influence both regionally and nationally.

"This award is wonderful recognition of the creative endeavors of our Center for Strategic Health Innovation to use emerging health technologies to improve the quality, cost, care, and access to health care within our state and beyond."

The HHS announced the REC designations in two rounds this year, with 32 awards announced in February and 28 this week. USA was among the second group of grantees to receive the competitive federal award.

For additional information about the Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers, visit <http://HealthIT.hhs.gov/programs/REC/>.

Follow these links for stories about the grant:

Mobile Press-Register --

http://blog.al.com/live/2010/04/south_alabama_gets_stimulus_gr.html

WALA-FOX 10 --

<http://www.fox10tv.com/dpp/news/usa-gets-grant-to-renew-medical-records>

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:48PM](#) No comments:

USA Cardiology Granted Accreditation for Nuclear Stress Testing

The University of South Alabama Heart Center was recently granted accreditation by the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Laboratories (ICANL).

The Heart Center at USA is one of a growing number of nuclear cardiology laboratories in the United States to be recognized for its commitment to high quality patient care and its provision of quality diagnostic testing.

"Throughout the country, nuclear stress testing remains the most commonly employed non invasive technique for the evaluation of chest pain to exclude coronary artery disease (CAD) or cholesterol blockage of the arteries to the heart muscle," said Dr. Clara Massey, professor of internal medicine and chief of cardiology at the USA College of Medicine.

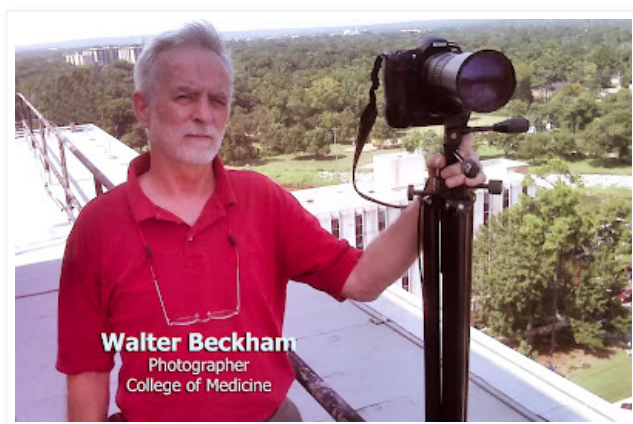
Each year, approximately 5.5 million stress nuclear cardiology studies are performed in the United States. During the testing procedure, the heart is evaluated at rest and during exercise using a small amount of radioisotope. Both the pump function and the blood flow of the heart are assessed.

"Image acquisition, processing and physician interpretation determine the accuracy of any test and, therefore, the quality of the examination," Dr. Massey said. "Being designated a nationally accredited ICANL lab means that every aspect of nuclear stress testing at the USA Heart Center, from image acquisition to physician interpretation, has been evaluated and has met the standards required for optimal patient care."

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, costing society over \$83.7 billion each year in health services, medications and lost work time due to disability. One American dies every 32 seconds of cardiovascular disease. For more information on cardiovascular disease, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:47PM](#) No comments:

Walter Beckham Retirement Reception



Following 33 years of service to the USA College of Medicine, Walter Beckham has announced his plans to retire. Please make plans to stop by on April 30th as we thank Walter for his numerous contributions to the medical school and congratulate him on his upcoming retirement.

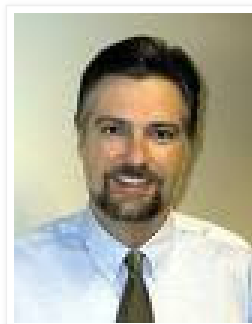
Walter Beckham Retirement Celebration
Mastin Building - 6th floor conference room
April 30, 2010 from 2:30 - 5 p.m.

If you have an interesting memory of Walter that you'd like to share, e-mail ptaylor@usouthal.edu.

Posted by Med School Watercooler at [1:46 PM](#) 2 comments:

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

"The Mitochondrial Paradigm for Disease Susceptibility: Prehistoric Events Influencing Contemporary Disease Risk"



The next Distinguished Scientist Seminar will be presented by Dr. Scott Ballinger on April 22, 2010, at 4 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building auditorium. His seminar is titled "The Mitochondrial Paradigm for Disease Susceptibility: Prehistoric Events Influencing Contemporary Disease Risk."

Currently, Dr. Ballinger is associate professor of pathology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine.

Dr. Ballinger's research focuses on environmental cardiology, free radical biology, and mitochondrial function. There is growing evidence that many forms of disease can be initiated by free radical mediated events or energetic deficits that can be related to cellular stress and damage. A cellular source and target of free radical production and damage is the mitochondrion.

Dr. Ballinger received B.S. and M.S. degrees from Texas A&M University, and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Emory University. He completed postdoctoral training in genetics and toxicology at the University of Vermont, initially as an environmental pathology fellow and later as a Department of Energy Alexander Hollaender Distinguished Fellow.

For more information on Dr. Ballinger's research, visit http://138.26.61.118/depts/MEB/SOMResearchFaculty/currentfacultydata.asp?s_lname=ballinger&s_keyword=&s_fname=scott&s_Department_Name=&s_ResearchTitle=&ID=sballinger.

For additional information, contact Natalie Kent at 461-1548.

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