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CIVITAN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER



Craig Powell, M.D., Ph.D.
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A message from Dr. Powell

Due to COVID-19, CIRC and all of UAB have transitioned to a "Limited Business Model." Most of the CIRC clinical providers and research faculty/staff are working from home with only essential and urgent visits being conducted on campus. Clinical visits are transitioning as much as possible to telephone or video-conferencing visits. Psychologists and others are working with national organizations to better understand what, if any, diagnostic testing can be done remotely, and some of this is occurring remotely already.

Research faculty, staff, and trainees are analyzing data, writing papers for publication, writing grant applications, and coming up with novel ideas for future work. At UAB, grant submissions are up by 8% and grant funding is up by 13% over this period last year. So we are all taking advantage of this time to plan and secure funding for ongoing and future work.

Long-term, I see CIRC being more resilient than ever. As we discover new ways to see patients remotely, we are hopeful that this will increase our ability to reach patients and their families in remote and outlying areas. As we plan for our return to research activities on campus, I am sure there will be a transition period before we will be up to full speed ahead. We will weather this "storm" together and come out stronger for it.

**For the latest announcements from the
University of Alabama at Birmingham
visit:**

<https://www.uab.edu/news/coronavirus>

Spotlight

Two from UAB lauded as among 100 inspiring black scientists in America

By Bob Shepard



Farah Lubin, Ph.D., and Michelle Gray, Ph.D. Two scientists on the faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham have been named to a list of 100 inspiring black scientists in America by Cross Talk, the official blog of Cell Press, a leading publisher of cutting-edge biomedical and physical science research and reviews.

Farah Lubin, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Neurobiology, and Michelle Gray, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Neurology, made the list.

The blog's guest author is Antentor O. Hinton Jr., Ph.D., a Ford Foundation and Burroughs Wellcome Fund postdoctoral fellow at the University of Iowa.

"There's a plethora of black scientists who make significant contributions to science, but many of them are unknown to the masses," Hinton said. "It's imperative that young black scientists know about the myriad accomplished scientists from African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, and African American backgrounds in the fields of life sciences, chemistry, engineering and physics."

Lubin is the director of the NINDS-funded Neuroscience Roadmap Scholar Program. She is also a scientist in the Comprehensive Center for Healthy Aging, the Comprehensive Neuroscience Center, the Center for Neurodegeneration and Experimental Therapeutics, and the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute. Her research focuses on learning, memory and synaptic plasticity, epigenetics, non-coding RNAs gene transcription, epilepsy disorders, neurodevelopment, and developmental disabilities.

Gray is the Dixon Scholar in Neuroscience in the Center for Neurodegeneration and Experimental Therapeutics, a scientist in the Comprehensive Neuroscience Center and the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute, and co-director for the School of Medicine's Summer in Biomedical Sciences Undergraduate Research Program. Her research focuses on the pathogenesis of Huntington's disease with a specific interest in astrocytes, as well as cardiac abnormalities in Huntington's disease and X-linked dystonia Parkinsonism.

The list includes 75 established investigators, including Lubin and Gray, who range from tenure track assistant professors to full professors and 25 scientists whom the author labels as rising stars.



Dr. Thyme named Pittman Scholar



By Mary Ashley Canevaro

Dr. Summer Thyme has been selected as one of only six faculty members in the School of Medicine to be selected as a Pittman Scholar, a program that recognizes the impact of junior faculty and supports the recruitment and retention of highly competitive scientists and physician-scientists.

The Pittman Scholars, named for the late James A. Pittman, M.D., longtime dean of the School of Medicine from 1973 to 1992, are nominated by their department chairs based on their research achievements and their potential for continued discovery in the basic or clinical sciences. Pittman is considered a principal architect of the School for his ability to recruit top scientists and physicians to UAB. Pittman Scholars are selected each academic year. The selected class of scholars receive \$12,500 per year for five years to support the faculty member's research-related activities or scholarly enrichment.

Dr. Thyme was recently recruited to UAB an assistant professor in the Department of Neurobiology.

Study yields new information about dementia's genetic risk factors

By Bob Shepard



Erik Roberson, M.D., Ph.D.

Researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville have learned new information about genetic risk factors that may contribute to dementia, potentially pushing the medical field closer to early detection.

The study, recently published in *Molecular Case Studies*, focused primarily on patients with early-onset dementia. With funding from the Daniel Foundation of Alabama, patients from the UAB Memory Disorders Clinic received genetic sequencing at HudsonAlpha.

The team at HudsonAlpha, led by Nick Cochran, Ph.D. found instances of known, significant risk factors. However, they also found cases where multiple moderate risk factors appeared to combine to contribute to further heightened risk.

“If we can create a more complete picture of the constellation of risk factors for dementia and observe the ways they interact, it could lead to more effective early tests to identify individuals who may be at high risk for dementia,” said Cochran. “This is critical because the most effective treatments for these diseases will be those that are administered early, perhaps even preventatively.”

VIDEOS

Check out the newest CIRC overview presentation!

<https://vimeo.com/410726907>

The Civitan International Research Center video which premiered at the Civitan Convention can be viewed online at <https://civitan.org/research/>

New focus is being made to spotlight the Civitan International Research Center with brief video clips.

<http://www.uab.edu/medicine/circ/test/328-civitan-convention>

<http://www.uab.edu/medicine/circ/test/324-what-is-the-circ>

<http://www.uab.edu/medicine/circ/test/316-athens-ladies-civitan-club>

<http://www.uab.edu/medicine/circ/test/303-priceville-junior-civitans-2>

<http://www.uab.edu/medicine/neurobiology/news-events/news-archive/203-neurobiology-labs>

For updates on the Civitan International Research Center
visit the website at:

www.uab.edu/medicine/circ

To schedule a private tour of the
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