

Friends of Physiology Newsletter

Department of Physiology - Spring 2004
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center



Five years ago, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the GSBS program with many of our alumni and friends. Time doesn't stand still, and neither does the Department of Physiology!

A few of our major happenings:

- We have worked with our colleagues in the Department of Health, Exercise, and Sport Sciences at TTU to develop joint curricula and to establish a doctoral program for students interested in specializing in Human Physiology. One of our current Ph.D. candidates is conducting research as part of this joint effort. (We hoped teaming up with the Exercise people would improve our waistlines. No luck yet.)
- The Dept received an institutional grant

- for an aptly named Center of Excellence, funding the "Center for Imaging Cellular Physiology and Pathophysiology" (2000)
- A \$600,000 state-of-the-art multi-photon confocal system was added (2002). The vibration-isolation table for this piece of equipment weighed over 2000 lbs. The installers had to remove the ceiling and work out a pulley system using the steel beams. We keep wondering if the people on the 4th floor know what's overhead!
- Students in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences program voted a Physiology Faculty member *Outstanding Teacher of the Year* three years in a row: Dr. J. Orem (2000), Dr. N. Sarvazyan (2001), Dr. T. Pressley (2002).

We currently have seven Graduate Students, including two MD/PhD candidates – Rick Bliss and Hesham Attaya. The others are Lee Ferris (PhD), Kamran Omidvar (MS), Sowmini Oomman (PhD), Anton Smirnov (PhD), and Rebin Titus (MS – May 2004).

Student training, as always, is a priority. Many of our trainees have won recognition and awards for presentations at national and international meetings. Department faculty members continue to serve as mentors of undergraduate students in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute program and many of these students have gone on to Medical School. We have also trained Clark Scholars and have had great success as part of the TTUHSC SABR (Summer Accelerated Biomedical Research) Program. Believe it or not, Lubbock has become a hot spot for visiting French students! We've had 13 complete the SABR program and expect more this summer. And we have received APS (American Physiological Society) grants to train high school teachers.

Graduating May 2004

Rebin Titus, MS
Mentor: John C. Fowler, Ph.D.

***"Age-Dependent and Hypoxic/Ischemic
Changes in Akt/Protein Kinase B
Activation in Rat Hippocampus"***



What Are They Doing Now?

Physiology Graduates:

We are pleased to announce that all graduates since 2000 are keeping busy (and are gainfully employed)!

Ph.D.s

Jose **Rojas** (2000) - Assistant Professor at Ross University in the Commonwealth of Dominica

Leon **Gervitz** (2002) - Medical Science Liaison for Proctor and Gamble

Andrew **Lovering** (2003) - Post Doctoral Fellow at University of Wisconsin, Madison

Masters

Shankar **Sanka** (2000) - General Internist in the Harnett Family Medicine Clinic, NC

Amanda **Purdom** (2001) – Technical writer, Dallas TX

Defeng **Luo** (2001) - Resident physician in the TTUHSC Psychiatry Dept. (Moves to Fam Medicine 7/04)

Pradeep **Dinakar** (2002) – 1st year Resident, Cook County Hospital, Chicago

Physiology Faculty:

Donald **Davies** – Professor. Continues as course director for Human Physiology and Medical Physiology.

Ariel **Escobar** – Asst. Professor from Argentina Our most recent faculty hire (2000).

John **Fowler** – Associate Professor. Lab is a med-school student training ground!

Sandor **Györke** – Professor. Has 3 concurrent NIH grants.

Lorenz **Lutherer** – Our “longest” Professor (1972). Instrumental in preparation of a successful HSC Center grant (see next page).

Raul **Martinez-Zaguilán** – Assoc. Professor. Awarded 1st major American Cancer Soc. grant at TTUHSC

James **McGrath** – Retired 2001. Sends postcards from Italy – wish we were there! He was conferred title of Professor Emeritus, joining Dr. Maurice Crass (1995).

Richard **Nathan** – Professor, Associate Chair. Avid rabbit trapper.

Alan **Neely** – Asst. Professor. Returned to Chile as Director of Centro de Neurociencias de Valparaiso.

John M. **Orem** – Murray Professor and Chair. Throws great parties!

Thomas **Pressley** – Professor. Serves as Graduate Advisor and SABR co-coordinator; *Parle français*.

Sandra **Sabatini** – Professor. Continues work in Nephrology.

Narine **Sarvazyan** – Associate Professor. Spearheads “Games of Physiology.”

Jean **Strahlendorf** – Professor. Can discuss (and pronounce) Purkinje Cells and Apoptosis.

More News

2002 Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Robert M. **Lust** was awarded the 2002 TTUHSC Distinguished Alumni Award from GSBS. Dr. Lust is Professor and Chair of the Physiology Dept. at East Carolina University School of Medicine, Greenville, NC. He received his Ph.D. May 1981 from the Dept. of Physiology and completed his Post Doctoral research in the Dept. of Medicine, Cardiology Division in August 1984.

Funding

To pay the bills, our faculty has received funding support from many prestigious sources, including the NIH, American Heart Association (National and Texas Affiliate), the Department of Defense, NATO, and the American Cancer Society. Our faculty members continue collaborations with colleagues throughout the US and around the world, including France, Slovakia, and Armenia. Faculty members have been invited to teach in Brazil, France, and Peru.

Games of Physiology

Expanding on our yearly summer picnics, we have held two “**Games of Physiology**” events in the past few years. During these games, our department divides into four highly trained and motivated teams: Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students, and Post Docs/ SABR. Competitive games have included a three-legged race, egg throw, soccer, marshmallow stuffing, and tug-of-war (the game that separates the old folks from the 20-somethings. Or the really big guys from the tiny ones). The Post Docs/SABR team took the trophy this year, but rumor has it the Staff will be back in force next time.

Swiftly Pedaling

The Staff was missing its star player in the games this past June. From mid-May through mid-August, the Department followed the exploits of Medical Research Assistant Luke **Swift** (Sarvazyan Lab), who decided to take a short bike ride with a friend to raise environmental awareness. The two daredevils rode from Dallas to Alaska, over plains and mountains, through deserts and snowstorms. They met some friendly towns-people, and not-so-friendly bears. We are glad to have him back safe and sound! (For more info, visit www.rideforward.org).

Dr. Györke Wins Chancellor's Award

Dr. Sandor **Györke** is a recipient of the Chancellor’s Council Award for Excellence in Teaching and Research. He was among those honored at a Holiday Dinner at the Lubbock Country Club on Dec. 12.

Drs. Lutherer and Janssen Earn Dean's Awards

Dr. Lorenz **Lutherer** was chosen to be this year’s recipient of the Dean’s Educational Innovation Award. Also, Dr. Herb **Janssen** was selected to be the recipient of the Dean’s Teaching Award for Basic Sciences. These two awards were bestowed at the School of Medicine General Faculty meeting on Nov. 18. Physiology is fortunate to have these two educators on our teaching team!

Dr. Györke is Achievement Award Winner

On Thursday October 30, Dr. Sandor **Györke** was honored for his contributions and achievements at TTUHSC when he received the President’s Research Achievement Award for the School of Medicine/Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the Faculty Awards Convocation.

Dr. Escobar, the Inventor

Dr. Ariel **Escobar**, assisted by Diego **Fainstein**, designed and developed a product related to single spot pulsed LED illumination for fluorescence and phosphorescence measurements. This has been licensed to IonOptix Corporation for production and distribution.

Remember Our “Friends” Endowment?

Thanks to our alumni and friends, including many receiving this newsletter, our Department has a **Friends of Physiology Endowment Fund**. We award small scholarships as a mechanism for attracting students to our program, and also use the funds for some student expenses not covered elsewhere. Faculty, staff and students continue to support this fund, as evidenced during the Horizon Campaign initiated by former Chancellor John Montford. Physiology received recognition and bonus funding from both the Dean’s Office and the President’s Office for being one of the few departments having 100% participation!

And ... Dr. John Orem - Murray Professor

In 2002, the Board of Regents awarded Dr. John **Orem** the Grover E. Murray Professorship. Murray Professorships, the highest honor the TTU Health Sciences Center may bestow on members of its faculty, are granted to professors in recognition of the attainment of national and/or international distinction for outstanding research or other creative scholarly achievements.

TTUHSC News

Dr. Lorenz **Lutherer** prepared a submission to Congress for a Center for Education, Research and Clinical Service in Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke at TTUHSC. The proposal requested \$5,000,000 over a three-year period. Congress appropriated approximately \$375,000 for the first year as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill. An application for 2.65 million for year two and 2 million for year three has been submitted for inclusion in the next budget bill. The Center should fund internal seed grants for TTUHSC faculty that can be leveraged into extramural sources, provide training for students, residents and health care providers within the regions served by TTUHSC and begin to address health disparities in public education and health care delivery within the region.

Dr. M. Roy **Wilson** was appointed president of the HSC on January 30, 2003. Prior to coming to Texas Tech, Dr. Wilson served as dean for the School of Medicine and as both the dean and the vice president for health sciences at Creighton University.

On January 1, 2004, HSC welcomed Roderick **Nairn**, Ph.D. as the executive vice president for academic affairs and dean of the graduate school of biomedical sciences. Dr. Nairn served as senior associate dean for academic affairs and professor and chair for the Department of Medical Microbiology and Immunology at Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Neb.

The grand opening for our new **Academic Classroom Building** was held in November 2003. Medical Physiology presented the first lecture held in the new auditorium, which has room for 200 and is outfitted with individual computer ports at each seat.

Have you included the Friends of Physiology in your will?