

# Agonist

The Official Newsletter for the  
Graduate Program of  
Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Amarillo, Texas



## UPDATE FROM DR. AHSAN

Last Fall was a busy semester for our program — full of academic and social events. For the first time in our program, we had three speakers from three different pharmaceutical companies, who presented seminars and spoke with our students regarding interview skills and career opportunities at pharmaceutical companies. Ms. Harrell, Dr. Patton and Dr. Gibbs talked about regulatory affairs, entrepreneurship and pharmacokinetic modelings, respectively. Three students (Ameya, Abir and Brijesh) defended their doctoral dissertations, and three new students (Faleh, Laxmi and Amer) joined the program. Faleh and Amer are the first two students from Saudi Arabia to join our student body, which is predominantly international. Let's congratulate our graduating students, and wish the best of luck to our new students! Five graduate students received travel awards to attend various national meetings. Congratulations to Abir, Neel, Parul, Rashed and Sukesh for their receipt of those awards! The program and students have organized or participated in a number of social events, which include the 2013 AAPS Alumni and Friends Reception in San Antonio, Texas, the Women in Science Endeavor, the AHA Heart Walk, the JDRF Walk, a picnic and bowling. We would like to thank Dean Smith for his support to organize the Alumni Reception at the AAPS 2013 meeting. Overall, Fall 2013 was a mix of hard work and fun!



Spring 2014  
Issue 13

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### GPPS Graduate Students Benefit from Distinguished Speakers

Our Fall 2013 semester got off to a great early start with outstanding guest speakers. On 8/16/2013, we were privileged to have **Kay Mary Harrell**, R.Ph., J.D., Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs, DPT Laboratories, Ltd. of San Antonio, TX, who presented information on "Regulatory Affairs and Drug Development".

In the same month on 08/28/2013, we were honored to have **John Patton**, Ph.D., President and CEO, Dance Pharmaceuticals, Inc. of San Francisco, CA. He presented research on "Marine Biology to Inhaled Insulin".

Later in the fall on 10/16/2013, we had very helpful input from **Megan Gibbs**, B.Sc.Pharm., Ph.D., F.C.P., Executive Director, Pharmacokinetics and Drug Metabolism, Amgen Inc. of Thousand Oaks, CA. She presented "Opportunities in Industry: Career Development" and "Modeling and Simulation to Impact on Decision Making in Early Development".

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Agonist is published every fall and spring semester by the Graduate Program of Pharmaceutical Sciences (GPPS). For updates and new information, e-mail Susan at [susan.king@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:susan.king@ttuhsc.edu).

## FALL 2013 GRADUATE

**Ameya Paranjpe**

Lab of Dr. Kalkunte S. Srivenugopal

**Dissertation Presented**

October 11, 2013

"Redox-based Repurposed Drugs as Potent and Rational Inhibitors of the Human DNA Repair Protein MGMT for Increased Efficacy of Anticancer Alkylating Agents"

**SPRING 2014 DISSERTATIONS****Nina Blakeman**

Lab of Dr. Margaret Weis  
Friday, March 14, 2014 at 9:00 am  
AMA SOP 335  
ABI SOP 1130  
LUB ACB 120

**Parul Gupta**

Lab of Dr. Sanjay Srivastava  
Thursday, March 20, 2014 at 3:30 pm  
AMA SOP 107  
ABI SOP 1130  
LUB ACB 230



Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Class of 2013-2014

**New Students for Spring 2014**

(left to right):

**Faleh Alqahtani, B.Pharm.**  
King Saud University  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
Lab: Dr. Ulrich Bickel

**Laxmi Iyer, B.Pharm.**  
Nirma University  
Ahmedabad, India  
Lab: Dr. Thomas Thekkumkara

**Amer Alali, B.Pharm.**  
King Saud University  
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## WiSE - WOMEN IN SCIENCE ENDEAVORS

By Alejandra Fernandez & Pooja Naik



Women in Science Endeavors (WiSE) is a community event that organizes interactive science workshops to encourage middle school girls from Amarillo, Canyon and surrounding areas to pursue a career in math or science. This year's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary WiSE Conference was held October 19<sup>th</sup> at Amarillo College, where 18 different experimental workshops were demonstrated to middle school girls.

On behalf of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Alejandra Fernandez, Amanda Whiteside and Pooja Naik



presented three sessions about emulsification, the science of lotions. In their workshop, they showed the girls how to prepare lotions. The girls got to mix the ingredients, while learning the importance of each one of them. Once they chose their favorite scents, they got to make and name their own lotions, and take them home. They were very excited not just to do hands-on preparations, but also to learn the science behind it. The workshop taught the girls the



process of emulsification, and the biology of our sensory system and brain in understanding the different kinds of smell.

WiSE is an important program for young girls because they come to realize that women can really make a difference in the sciences and that this field comprises everything from making bubbles to making medicines. More importantly, the girls leave thinking that science can be fun.



## AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

**Shahriar Absar** — American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists, Graduate Student Symposium Award in Drug Discovery and Development and Interface, Selected for Podium Presentation, Travel Support Award, \$1,000.00, Fall 2013

**Neel Fofaria** — AACR-NCI-EORTC International Conference on Molecular Targets and Cancer Therapeutics, Scholar-in-Training Travel Award, \$600.00, Fall 2013

**Parul Gupta** — Lone Star Regional Chapter of the Society of Toxicology, Travel Support Award, \$170.00, Fall 2013

**Parul Gupta** — Lone Star Regional Chapter of the Society of Toxicology, Charles River Award, \$100.00, Fall 2013

**Parul Gupta** — GSBS Dean's Scholar Award, \$5,000.00 per year for duration of her degree plan, Dec.2013

**Mohammad R Islam** — American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists, Graduate Student Symposium in Drug Discovery and Development and Interface, Selected for Podium Presentation, Travel Support Award, \$1,000.00, Fall 2013

**Benard Ogola** — Office of Institutional Planning and Assessment Scholarship, \$500.00, Fall 2013

**Sukesh Voruganti** — AAPS DDDI (Drug Discovery & Development Interface) Section Travel Award, \$500.00, Fall 2013

**GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR PROGRAM - FALL 2013**

8/16/13 - **Guest Speaker: Kay Mary Harrell**, R.Ph., J.D., Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs at DPT Laboratories, Ltd. - "Regulatory Affairs and Drug Development"

8/21/13 - **Kamrun Nahar** - "Inhalable peptide-decorated nanocarrier for targeting pulmonary vasculature"

8/28/13 - **Guest Speaker: John Patton**, Ph.D., Dance Pharmaceuticals - "Marine Biology to Inhaled Insulin"

9/4/13 - **Manoj Banjara** - "Lipocalin-2 is a Marker for Neuronal Cell Death in Sterile Neuroinflammation"

9/11/13 - **Jee Hyun Park** - "Establishing a Brain Metastasis Model for Evaluating TCRm Therapeutics"

9/18/13 - **Parul Gupta** - "Decoding the Molecular & Cellular Mechanisms of HER2 in Breast Cancer Metastasis"

9/18/13 - **Sharad Sharma** - "mTOR Inhibition Prevents BMS-777607 Induced Chemoresistance in Breast Cancer Cells by Suppressing Polyploidy and Senescence"

9/25/13 - **Kito Barrow** - "Improving the Efficacy of Taxane Drugs with Methylseleninic Acid in the Treatment of Castration-Resistant Prostate Cancer"

9/25/13 - **Neel Fofaria** - "STAT-3 induces anoikis resistance, promotes cell migration and metastatic potential in cancer cells"

10/2/13 - **Guest Speaker: Harvinder Gill**, Ph.D., TTU Lubbock - "Engineering Micro and Nanosystems for Mucosal Vaccination"

10/9/13 - **Jun Liu** - "Synthesis of a Choline Transporter Inhibitor and Design of Affinity Labeling Probes"

10/9/13 - **Nina Blakeman** - "The Interplay Between eNOS Palmitoylation and Phosphorylation: The Triacsin C Effect"

10/16/13 - **Guest Speaker: Megan Gibbs** - B.Sc.Pharm, Ph.D., F.C.P., Amgen, Inc. -

"Modeling and Simulation to Impact on Decision Making in Early Development"

10/23/13 - **Md. Jahidur Rashid** - "Isolation and Characterization of Resistant Colon Cancer Cells to RON Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitor-BMS777607"

10/30/13 - **Faculty Speaker: Jinhui Zhang**, Ph.D., TTUHSC Amarillo - "Clinical pharmacokinetics of cancer chemopreventive phytochemicals from *Angelica gigas* Nakai (AGN) - Starting a journey in translational research"

11/6/13 - **Md. Kowser Miah** - "Effects of Hepatectomy and Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury on the Pharmacokinetics of the Blood-Brain Barrier Permeability Marker Sodium Fluorescein in Rats"

11/6/13 - **Alok Ranjan** - "Repurposing antipsychotic drug 'Penfluridol' for cancer treatment"

11/13/13 - **Guest Speaker: Barry Maurer**, M.D., Ph.D., TTUHSC Lubbock - "Anticancer Cytotoxicity of Dihydroceramides - Clinical Translation"

11/20/13 - **Raktima Bhattacharya** - "Targeted Delivery of NFkB Decoys Protects Brain Endothelial Monolayers against Hypoxia/Reoxygenation Injury"

11/20/13 - **A.G.M. Mostofa** - "Primary resistance to polyploidy induction as a mechanism of chemosensitivity in BMS-777607-treated colorectal cancer cells"

12/4/13 - **Md. Rashedul Islam** - "Screening biphalin peptide analogs for their neuroprotective potential in models of ischemia"

12/4/13 - **Raghavender Chivukula** - "Studying TCR mimic monoclonal antibodies in immunocompetent mouse tumor models"

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**Palo Duro Canyon from west rim, contributed by Chris Adkins (F'13)**



**GPPS ART GALLERY**

**Lake Meredith sunset, contributed by Md. Rashedul Islam**



If you have taken some great photo shots, please send us one!

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS



### Biomedical Engineering Society Annual Meeting September 25-28, 2013 Seattle, WA

♦ **Nilesh Gupta**, Shahriar Absar and Fakhru Ahsan. "Targeted inhalable Pegylated lipidic nanomicelles containing fasudil: formulation and characterization."

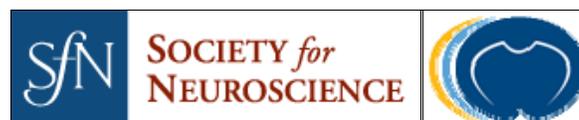
### American Association for Cancer Research, Molecular Targets and Cancer Therapeutics October 19-23, 2013 \* Boston, MA

♦ **Neel M. Fofaria** and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Over-expression of STAT-3 induces anoikis resistance, promotes cell migration and metastatic potential in cancer cells."



### Lone Star Regional Chapter of the Society of Toxicology October 18, 2013 \* Lubbock, TX

♦ **Parul Gupta** and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Natural compound cucurbitacin B inhibits metastatic breast cancer through HER2 suppression."



### Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting November 9-13, 2013 \* San Diego, CA

♦ **Manoj Banjara**, Katie Bennett, Alejandra Fernandez, and James Stoll. "Lipocalin-2 induction in sterile neuroinflammation: a marker for neuronal cell death."



### AAPS \* November 10-14, 2013 \* San Antonio, TX

♦ **R. Balyan**, H. R. Thorsheim, R. Samala, Q. R. Smith. "Metastasis Distribution of Capecitabine and its Metabolites 5'-Deoxy-5-Fluorocytidine, 5'-Deoxy-5-Fluorouridine, and 5'-Fluorouracil in a Preclinical Mouse Model of Breast Cancer."

♦ **Raktima Bhattacharya**, Rinki Jain, Jon Weidanz, Paul Lockman, Ulrich Bickel. "Differential Proapoptotic Effect of TCR Mimic Antibodies on Breast Cancer and Brain Endothelial Cells."

♦ **Vindhya Edpuganti**, Reza Mehvar. "UHPLC-Tandem Mass Spectrometric (LC-MS/MS) Analysis of Free Concentrations of Arachidonic Acid (AA) and its Cytochrome P450 Metabolites in the Liver of Rats after Hepatic Ischemia."

♦ **Neel M. Fofaria** and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "STAT-3 induces anoikis resistance, promotes cell migration and metastatic potential in tumor cell in vitro and in vivo."

♦ **N. Gupta**, B. Patel and S. Srivastava. "Targeted stealth micelles for inhalational delivery of fasudil, a rhokinase inhibitor."

♦ **P. Gupta** and S. Srivastava. "Cucurbitacin B inhibits the growth of HER2 positive breast tumor cells by suppressing integrin signaling in vitro and in vivo."

♦ **P. Gupta** and S. Srivastava. "Cucurbitacin B impedes breast cancer metastasis by suppressing HER2 driven epithelial to mesenchymal transition (EMT) through SNAIL."

♦ **L. Li**, C. J. Greene, H. S. Qhattal, **T. Hye**, X. Liu. "Design of Click Chemistry Based Hyaluronan-Near Infrared Dye Conjugate (IR820-HA) for Selective Imaging of Tumors and Lymph Nodes."



### Society for Free Radical Biology and Medicine November 20-24, 2013 \* San Antonio, TX

♦ **Pooja Naik**, Ravi Sajja, Shikha Prasad and Luca Cucullo. "Oxidative and Proinflammatory Impact of Tobacco Smoke Products on Blood Brain Barrier Endothelial Cells."

♦ **Mohammad R Islam**, Adriano Mollica, Yeon Lee, Victor Hruby and Thomas J Abbruscato. "Screening biphalin peptide analogs for their neuroprotective potential in models of ischemia."

♦ **Mohammad K. Miah**, Imam H. Shaik, Reza Mehvar. "Effects of Hepatic Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury on the P-Glycoprotein Activity at the Blood-Brain Barrier."

♦ **S. A. Nag**, J-J. Qin, M-H. Wang 1, W. Wang, J. K. Buolamwini, R. Zhang. "Ultra-performance liquid-chromatography for rapid analysis of SP-141, a novel experimental anticancer agent, and an initial pharmacokinetics and biodistribution study."

♦ **Brijeshkumar Patel**, Nilesh Gupta and Fakhru Ahsan. "PEG-PLGA Particles of Montelukast and Heparin for Enhanced Anti-inflammatory Effects in Asthma."

♦ **Sharad Sharma**, Ruiwen Zhang, Ming Wang. "mTOR Inhibitor AZD8055 Prevents BMS-777607 Induced Chemoresistance in Breast Cancer Cells by Blocking Development of Polyploidy and Senescence."

♦ **Sukesh Voruganti**, Jiang-Jiang Qin, Wei Wang, Ming-Hai Wang, John K. Buolamwini, and Ruiwen Zhang. "Novel Small Molecule MDM2 Inhibitors for Pancreatic Cancer Therapy."

## PUBLICATIONS

≈**Edpuganti V**, Mehvar R. "UHPLC-MS/MS analysis of arachidonic acid and 10 of its major cytochrome P450 metabolites as free acids in rat livers: Effects of hepatic ischemia." *J Chromatogr B Analyt Technol Biomed Life Sci.* 2013 Aug 14. pii: S1570-0232(13)00429-7.

≈**Paranjpe A**, Zhang R, Ali-Osman F, Bobustuc GC, Srivenugopal KS. "Disulfiram is a direct and potent inhibitor of human O6-methylguanine-DNA methyltransferase (MGMT) in brain tumor cells and mouse brain and markedly increases the alkylating DNA damage." *Carcinogenesis.* 2013 Dec 6. [Epub ahead of print]

≈**Patel B**, Gupta N, Ahsan F. "Low-Molecular-Weight Heparin (LMWH)-Loaded Large Porous PEG-PLGA Particles for the Treatment of Asthma." *J Aerosol Med Pulm Drug Deliv.* 2013 Nov 28; 27:1-9. [Epub ahead of print].

≈Jun-Ying Zeng, **Sharad Sharma**, Yong-Qing Zhou, Hang-Ping Yao, Xing Hu, Ruiwen Zhang, and Ming-Hai Wang. "Synergistic Activities of MET/RON Inhibitor BMS-777607 and mTOR inhibitor AZD8055 against Chemoresistant Polyploid Cells Derived from Pancreatic Cancer and Cancer Stem Cells." *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics.* Equal contribution first author November 2013.

≈Mamoon Rashid, **Naomi J. Wangler**, Li Yang, Kaushik Shah, Thiruma V. Arumugam, Thomas J. Abbruscato, and Vardan T. Karamyan. "Functional up-regulation of endopeptidase neurolysin during post-acute and early recovery phases of experimental stroke in mouse brain." *J Neurochem.* 2013 Oct 27. doi: 10.1111/jnc.12513. [Epub ahead of print]

**2013 ANNUAL AAPS ALUMNI  
& FRIENDS RECEPTION**  
November 11 — 5:30-7:00pm  
River Room at  
Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center  
San Antonio, Texas



Khyati Patel, Brijesh Patel



Mohamed Nounou



Raktima Bhattacharya, Rajiv Balyan, Sharad Sharma



Parul Gupta



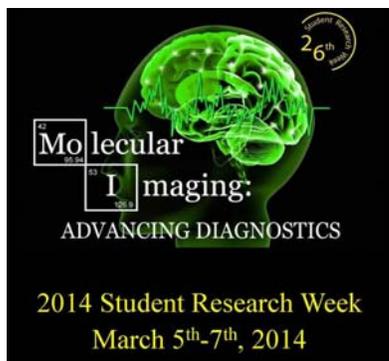
Md. Rashedul Islam, Tanvirul Hye, Nahida (Mily) Akhter



Dr. Fakhru Ahsan, Celestin Youan, Nilesh Gupta

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Each year, **Student Research Week (SRW)** provides a platform for students and faculty across the Texas Tech system and regional universities to showcase their research. This is a golden opportunity for various science disciplines to come together and interact in a professional environment, to facilitate exchange of ideas, promote their excellent research facilities and stimulate collaborations, together, progressing towards the advancement of science. The theme for the 2014 SRW is **Molecular Imaging: Advancing Diagnostics**, with emphasis on promoting the united efforts among researchers and clinical practitioners, leading to the use of molecular imaging in quality research and healthcare applications. This event will highlight this rapidly advancing method of medicine which will undoubtedly reshape the future of all medical professions. To encourage this endeavor, the Lubbock Graduate Student Association (GSA) will be hosting two eminent personalities from the field of fluorescent protein research and development of diagnostic applications. There will be two Keynote Speakers on Friday. The 11:00 am presentation will be by **Martin L. Chalfie, Ph.D.**, 2008 Chemistry Nobel Laureate, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor and Chair of Biological Sciences, Columbia University. The 1:00 pm session will be presented by **Lee Josephson, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Department of Radiology, Harvard Medical School and Associate Professor, Center for Translational Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Research, Massachusetts General Hospital.



**UPCOMING CONFERENCES**



*Thirteenth Annual School of Pharmacy Research Days*  
*TTUHSC Amarillo and Amarillo ~ Research Presentations*  
*Civic Center Heritage Room ~ Annual Dinner*  
**~~~ June 5 - 6, 2014 ~~~**

*Watch your e-mail for further information from Office of Sciences.*



The 10-week 2014 Amarillo Biomedical Research Internship Program will begin the end of May and run through the beginning of August. Applications will be accepted until Saturday, **March 15, 2014**. Interested undergraduate students are encouraged to apply. Contact Teresa Carlisle by e-mail at [Teresa.Carlisle@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:Teresa.Carlisle@ttuhsc.edu).

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**2014**

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\*For more detailed information on an alumni OR for any changes/additions, please contact the Graduate Program Office.

**GSAA BULLETIN BOARD**

**GPPS students participated (Fall 2013) in:**

- \*Back to School Event
- \*JDRF Walk to Cure Diabetes
- \*AHA Heart Walk
- \*Clothing Drive for Salvation Army
- \*GSAA Picnic
- \*GSAA New Student Orientation & Bowling

**Planned Community Events:**

- \*Salvation Army Soup Kitchen Aide
- \*Volunteering at Ronald McDonald House in Amarillo

**Spring 2014 Social Events:**

- \*Lights-Out Miniature Golf — January 25
- \*International Night — February 22
- \*Hockey Night — March 8
- \*Colorado Ski Trip — March 21-23, 2014  
(for more info, contact Rashed Islam,  
GSAA President, [rashedul.islam@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:rashedul.islam@ttuhsc.edu))
- \*1990's Costume Party — April 11



Born to Shabana and Hussaini Syed Sha Qhattal on 01/07/2014  
Umar Syed, 7.7 lbs, 20"



Born to Charetta West and Chris Tucker on 10/13/2013  
Cali Jazele, 6.5 lbs, 19"

**Shikha married**  
Rishi Rahangdale  
12/10/2013  
in Seoni,  
Madhya Pradesh,  
India



AHA Heart Walk

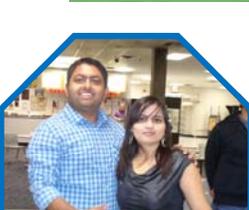
**GSAA  
Service  
& Fun**



JDRF Walk to Cure Diabetes



**PICNIC**



**BOWLING**

