

# Agonist

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

## UPDATE FROM DR. AHSAN



We started this past fall by greeting six new students, and closed the semester by saying “goodbye” to five students who defended their PhD dissertations between August and October. Our six new students were Ahasanul, Ismail, Ronak, Nehal, Hanumantha Rao and Sushanta; let’s wish them all the best during their stay in our program. Kamrun, Subhasree, Nilesh, Jun and Manoj became doctors last fall and began the next phase of their career. Congratulations to all the newly minted doctors! We look forward to welcoming our new graduates back on May 9th at the graduation ceremony in Lubbock. Last November, we hosted our alumni and friends with an evening reception during the AAPS meeting in San Diego; our graduate school alumni and ex-faculty members from all over the country have graciously attended this social event. Thank you, alumni, for your support! As in previous fall semesters, the presence of TTUHSC SOP at various national meetings was hard to miss: our GPPS students presented their research at five national meetings, and have received numerous travel awards from various scientific societies. The award from the American Heart Association of the Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to Pooja merits special note: Pooja is the second student, after Dr. Absar, to receive a nationally competitive fellowship of such merit. Congratulations to Pooja and to her mentor, Dr. Cucullo! On top of academic events, our students participated in many organized community, fund-raising and social events, including the Women in Science Endeavors, the American Heart Association’s Heart Walk, skating and bowling. They have also helped improve collaboration between our GSAA and other student organizations, combining their efforts and benefiting the community, our campus’s pharmaceutical academics and the professional future of all concerned. (Even our art gallery shows the positive effect of combining talents and blending perspectives.) On a more personal level, we are delighted to welcome three new members to our TTUHSC SOP family: one brand new bride (Munmun, Kowser’s wife) and two brand new babies (Emma born to the Trippers, and Jeffrey born to the Jiangs). Thus, the fall semester has had all the events that an American university family might have: graduations, new admissions, farewells, a reception, academic success stories, a wedding, and the birth of new babies!

Spring 2015  
Issue 15

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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).

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**FALL 2014 GRADUATES**

**Kamrun Nahar, PhD**  
Lab of Dr. Fakhru Ahsan

**Dissertation Presented**  
August 22, 2014

“Respirable and Targetable Particulate Delivery Systems for PAH Therapy”



**Subhasree Nag, PhD**  
Lab of Dr. Ruiwen Zhang

**Dissertation Presented**  
September 26, 2014

“Preclinical Pharmacology of a Novel Small Molecule MDM2 Inhibitor as Anti-cancer Agent”



**Nilesh Gupta, PhD**  
Lab of Dr. Fakhru Ahsan

**Dissertation Presented**  
October 7, 2014

“Homing-Peptide Equipped Cellular and Lipidic Carriers for Inhalational Delivery of anti-PAH Drugs”



**Jun Liu, PhD**  
Lab of Dr. James Stoll

**Dissertation Presented**  
October 10, 2014

“Characterization and photoaffinity labeling of the low-affinity choline transporter”

**Manoj Banjara, PhD**  
Lab of Dr. James Stoll

**Dissertation Presented**  
October 15, 2014

“Lipocalin-2 Expression in Neuroinflammatory Models: Observations and Mechanisms of its Expression”



**SPRING 2015 DISSERTATIONS**

**Raktima Bhattacharya**, Lab of Dr. Ulrich Bickel  
Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 3:00 pm  
AMASOP 335 / ABISOP 1130 / LUBHSC 1C111

**Rajiv Balyan**, Lab of Dr. Quentin Smith  
Friday, March 13, 2015 at 1:30 pm  
AMASOP 335 / ABISOP 1314 / LUBHSC 1C111

**Pooja Naik**, Lab of Dr. Luca Cucullo  
Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 3:00 pm  
AMASOP 107 / ABISOP 1314 / LUBHSC 1C111

**NEW STUDENTS  
for Spring 2015**

**Yousuf Ali**  
Lab: Dr. Margaret Weis

**Anwar Hossain**,  
Lab: Dr. Nadezhda (Nadia) German

**Shyanne Page**  
Lab: Dr. Abraham Al-Ahmad

**Ali Sifat**  
Lab: Dr. Thomas Abbruscato

**Sreedhar Reddy Suthe**  
Lab: Dr. Ming-Hai Wang

**Rajpal Vangala**  
Lab: Dr. Sanjay Srivastava



(back row): Sreedhar Reddy Suthe, Anwar Hossain  
(front row): Yousuf Ali, Rajpal Vangala, Shyanne Page, Ali Sifat



**Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Class of 2014-2015**

## **WISE - WOMEN IN SCIENCE ENDEAVORS**

By Alejandra Fernandez & Pooja Naik

Women in Science Endeavors (WiSE) hosts a science, technology, engineering and mathematics conference for middle school girls every year. The girls participate in hands-on activities and experiments involving various scientific concepts to motivate them to pursue careers in science-related fields. This year, the event's theme was "Girls Can't What?", and it took place at Amarillo College on November 8th, 2014.

Graduate students Alejandra Fernandez and Pooja Naik, along with pharmacy student Amanda Whiteside, conducted a workshop on surfactant chemistry where the girls understood the science and importance of surfactants. The middle school girls were then able to apply these concepts while making their own scented shower gels. The workshop was successful and the girls left knowing that science can be fun.



(L to R): **Alejandra Fernandez,**  
**Amanda Whiteside,** **Pooja Naik**

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## GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR PROGRAM - FALL 2014

08/20/14 - **Manoj Banjara** - "Characterization of Neuroinflammation Induced by Pathogen- and Non-Pathogen- Associated Molecular Patterns"  
 08/22/14 - **Kamrun Nahar**, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Respirable and Targetable Particulate Delivery Systems for PAH Therapy"  
 08/27/14 - **Subhasree Nag** - "NFAT as Cancer Target: Mission Possible?"  
 09/03/14 - **Neel Fofaria** - "Overexpression of Mcl-1 induces resistance to BRAFV600E inhibitor therapy in melanoma"  
 09/10/14 - **Md Rashedul Islam** - "Neuroprotective function of biphalin peptide and non-peptide analogs in models of ischemia"  
 09/24/14 - **Guest Speaker: Michaela Jansen**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Dept. of Cell Physiology and Molecular Biophysics, TTUHSC, Lubbock - "The intracellular domain of pentameric ligand-gated ion channels"  
 09/26/14 - **Subhasree Nag**, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Preclinical Pharmacology of a Novel Small Molecule MDM2 Inhibitor as Anticancer Agent"  
 10/01/14 - **Md. Kowser Miah** - "Determination of Blood-Brain Barrier Permeability Using Sucrose"  
 10/07/14 - **Nilesh Gupta**, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Homing-peptide equipped cellular and

lipidic carriers for inhalational delivery of anti-PAH drugs"  
 10/08/14 - **Alejandra Fernandez** - "Anticonvulsant Effects of Voluntary Exercise in Mouse Seizure Models"  
 10/10/14 - **Jun Liu**, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Characterization and photoaffinity labeling of the low-affinity choline transporter"  
 10/15/14 - **Manoj Banjara**, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Lipocalin-2 Expression in Neuroinflammatory Models: Observations and Mechanisms of its Expression"  
 10/22/14 - **Kito Barrow** - "Taxanes and Methylseleninic Acid for the Combinational Therapy of Castration Resistant Prostate Cancer"  
 10/29/14 - **Nihar Kinarivala** - "Repurposing Flupirtine for the Treatment of Batten Disease"  
 11/12/14 - **Guest Speaker: Carla Lacerda**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Dept. of Chemical Engineering, TTU, Lubbock - "Valvular Cell Transformation Due to Mechanical Stresses in the Extracellular Environment"  
 11/19/14 - **Sukesh Voruganti** - "Polycomb Group Proteins as Target for Cancer Therapy"  
 12/03/14 - **Kshitij Verma** - "Selective AKR1C3 Inhibitors as Potential Leads for the Treatment of Castrate Resistant Prostate Cancer and Acute Myeloid Leukemia"

## PUBLICATIONS

≈**Fofaria NM**, Srivastava SK. Critical role of STAT-3 in melanoma metastasis through anoikis resistance. *Oncotarget*. 2014 Aug 30;5(16):7051-64.

≈**Nihar Kinarivala**, Paul C. Trippier. Exploration of relative chemoselectivity in the hydrodechlorination of 2-chloropyridines. *Tetrahedron Letters*. 2014 Sep 24. . 55(39): p. 5386-5389. doi: 10.1016/j.tetlet.2014.08.008. [Epub ahead of print]

≈Wang W, **Nag S**, Zhang X, Wang MH, Wang H, Zhou J, Zhang R. Ribosomal Proteins and Human Diseases: Pathogenesis, Molecular Mechanisms, and Therapeutic Implications. *Med Res Rev*. 2014 Aug 28. doi: 10.1002/med.21327. [Epub ahead of print]

≈**Nag S**, Qin JJ, Patil S, Deokar H, Buolamwini JK, Wang W, Zhang R. A quantitative LC-MS/MS method for determination of SP-141, a novel pyrido[b]indole anticancer agent, and its application to a mouse PK study. *J Chromatogr B Analyt Technol Biomed Life Sci*. 2014 Oct 15;969:235-40. doi: 10.1016/j.jchromb.2014.08.030. Epub 2014 Aug 28.

≈**Nag S**, Qin JJ, **Voruganti S**, Wang MH, Sharma H, Patil S, Buolamwini JK, Wang W, Zhang R.

Development and validation of a rapid HPLC method for quantitation of SP-141, a novel pyrido[b] indole anticancer agent, and an initial pharmacokinetic study in mice. *Biomed Chromatogr*. 2014 Oct 8. doi:10.1002/bmc.3327. [Epub ahead of print]

≈Ming-Hai Wang, Wei Wang, Hang-Ping Yao, **Sharad Sharma**, Liang Feng, Jianwei Zhou, and Ruiwen Zhang. Human Tumor Xenografts in Mouse as a Model for Evaluating Therapeutic Efficacy of Monoclonal Antibodies Targeting Receptor Tyrosine Kinases. *Methods in Molecular Biology*. (under review 2014 Sep 9)

≈Wang W, Qin JJ, **Voruganti S**, Srivenugopal KS, **Nag S**, Patil S, Sharma H, Wang MH, Wang H, Buolamwini JK, Zhang R. The pyrido[b]indole MDM2 inhibitor SP-141 exerts potent therapeutic effects in breast cancer models. *Nat Commun*. 2014 Oct 1;5:5086. doi: 10.1038/ncomms6086. *Gastroenterology*. 2014 Jul 9.

≈Wang W, Cheng J, Qin JJ, **Voruganti S**, **Nag S**, Fan J, Gao Q, Zhang R. RYBP expression is associated with better survival of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) and responsiveness to chemotherapy of HCC cells in vitro and in vivo. *Oncotarget*. 2014 Nov 30;5(22):11604-19.

# AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

**Rajiv Balyan:** Travel Award, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), Pharmacokinetics, Pharmacodynamics and Drug Metabolism (PPDM) Section, San Diego, CA. November 2014.

**Alejandra Fernandez:** Young Investigator Travel Award, American Epilepsy Society (AES), Seattle, WA. December 2014.

**Nilesh Gupta:** Travel Award, Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES), San Antonio, TX. October 2014.

**Nilesh Gupta:** Graduate Student Research Award in Biotechnology, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists, San Diego, CA. November 2014.

**Md. Rashedul Islam:** Travel Award, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), Natraceutical and Natural Products Focus Group (NNPFC), San Diego, CA. November 2014.

**Md. Abul Kaisar:** Student Travel Award, American College of Toxicology (ACT). November 2014.

**Pooja Naik:** Predoctoral Fellowship, American Heart Association (AHA), SouthWest Affiliate (SWA). December 2014.

**Alok Ranjan:** Syngenta Fellowship Award in Human Health Applications of New Technologies, Society of Toxicology (SOT). December 2014.

**Md. Jahidur Rashid:** Travel Award, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), Formulation Design and Development (FDD) Section, San Diego, CA. November 2014

**Shikha:** Student Travel Award, American College of Toxicology (ACT). November 2014.



Amarillo sunset, submitted by Nihar Kinarivala



Crested Butte, Colorado snowy mountains, submitted by Nihar Kinarivala

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**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

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**TTUHSC GSBS  
Faculty & Student Retreat  
September 12, 2014  
Lubbock, TX**

**Alejandra Fernandez** and James Stoll. "Effect of Triheptanoin Feeding on Spontaneous Seizures of Pilocarpine-Induced Epileptic Mice". [Podium Presentation]

**Alejandra Fernandez** and James Stoll. "An Anaplerotic Diet Reduces Spontaneous Seizures in Pilocarpine-Induced Epileptic Mice".



**American College of Toxicology  
November 9-12, 2014 \* Orlando, FL**

♦ **Md. A. Kaisar**, Shikha Prasad, Pooja Naik and Luca Cucullo. "Protecting the BBB from tobacco smoke damage using popular antioxidants supplements: Is it really working?"

♦ **Shikha Prasad**, Pooja Naik, Md A Kaisar, Ravi Sajja and Luca Cucullo. "Cigarette Smoke-Induced BBB Toxicity Under Normal and Altered Glycemia: Proteomic Assessment of BBB Endothelial Dysfunction".



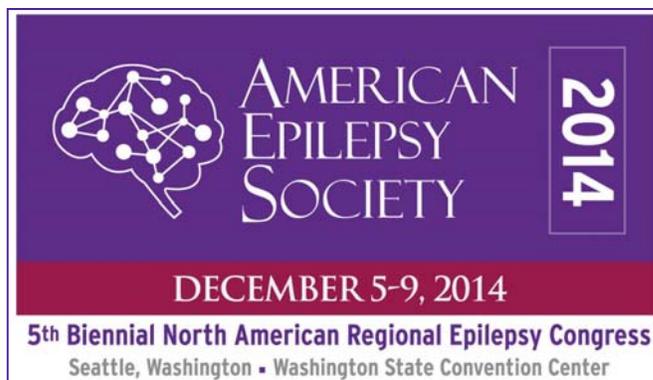
**Biomedical Engineering Society  
October 22-25, 2014  
San Antonio, TX**

♦ **Nilesh Gupta**, Crystal Woods, Eva Nozik-Grayck, Fakhru Ahsan. "Targeted Liposomes Containing Superoxide Dismutase and Fasudil Reduces Chronic Symptoms in PAH Rats".



**Lone Star Regional Chapter of the  
Society of Toxicology (LSSOT)  
November 13-14, 2014 \* Austin, TX**

**Pooja Naik**, Ravi Sajja and Luca Cucullo. "Tobacco Smoke Induced Inflammatory Response at the Blood Brain Barrier Endothelium: A Comparative Analysis of Full Flavor vs Reduced Nicotine Products."



**American Epilepsy Society  
December 5-9, 2014 \* Seattle, WA**

**Alejandra Fernandez** and James Stoll. "A 35% Triheptanoin Diet Reduces Spontaneous Electrographic Seizures in Pilocarpine-Induced Epileptic Mice".

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (cont'd)

### 2014 AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition

November 2-6, 2014

San Diego Convention Center  
San Diego



♦ **R. Balyan**, H. R. Thorsheim, R. Samala, Q. R. Smith. "Brain Metastasis Distribution of Capecitabine and its Metabolites in Two Pre-Clinical Mouse Models of Breast Cancer".

♦ **Raktima Bhattacharya**, Mohammad Rashedul Islam, Li Yang, Thomas Abbruscato, Ulrich Bickel. "Antibody Targeted Delivery of NF kB Decoys Protects Brain Endothelial Cells from Ischemia/Reperfusion Injury".

**Vindhya Edpuganti** and Reza Mehvar. "Phospholipase A2 Drives the Changes in Hepatic Disposition of Arachidonic Acid (AA) and its Cytochrome P450 (P450) Metabolites after Warm Hepatic Ischemia Reperfusion (IR) Injury in Rats".

♦ **Nilesh Gupta**, Crystal Woods, Eva Nozik-Grayck, Fakhru Ahsan. "Targeted Liposomes Containing Superoxide Dismutase and Fasudil Reduces Chronic Symptoms in PAH Rats".

♦ **T. Hye**, H. S. Qhattal, X. Liu. "Targeting Breast Cancer Brain Metastases Using PEG and Surfactant-Coated Nanoemulsion".

♦ Amer Alali, **Tanvirul Hye**, Hussaini Qhattal, Xinli Liu. "Brain Uptake Mechanism of Self-Emulsifying

Nanoemulsions in Intracranial". [presented by T.Hye]

♦ **Mohammad R Islam**, Li Yang, Adriano Mollica, Yeon Lee, Victor Hruby, Thomas Abbruscato. "Neuroprotective Effects of Biphalin-Fentanyl Multivalent Opioid Agonists in Ischemic Stroke Models".

♦ **Jun Liu** and James Stoll. "Novel Choline Analogs to Study the Low-Affinity Choline Transporter".

♦ **Mohammad K. Miah**, Imam H. Shaik, Ulrich Bickel, and Reza Mehvar. "Pitfalls of Using Sodium Fluorescein (FL) as a Blood-Brain Barrier (BBB) Permeability Marker Without Consideration of Its Systemic Pharmacokinetics".

♦ **Pooja Naik** and Luca Cucullo. "Impact of Cigarette Smoking on Blood-Brain Barrier ABC and SLC Transporters: Implications for Pharmacotherapy in Chronic Smokers".

♦ **Jahidur Rashid**, Kamrun Nahar, Fakhru Ahsan. "Combination of Rho-Kinase Inhibitor and Nitric Oxide Donor for the Treatment of Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension".



#### 2014 ANNUAL AAPS TTUHSC SOP ALUMNI & FRIENDS RECEPTION

November 4 — 5:30-7:00pm

San Diego Marriott

Marquis and Marina, Solana Room  
San Diego, California

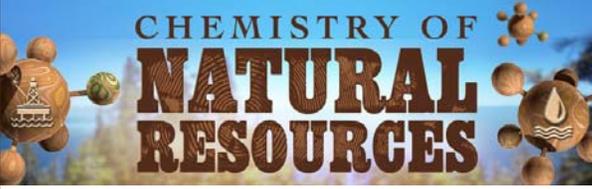


**Spring/Summer CONFERENCES**



**American Society for Neurochemistry**  
The Latest in Molecular and Cellular Neurobiology

**46th Annual Meeting**  
March 14-18, 2015 \* Atlanta, GA



**CHEMISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY**  
249TH NATIONAL MEETING & EXPOSITION  
MARCH 22-26, 2015 \* DENVER, CO



**San Diego, California**

**54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and ToxExpo™**  
March 22-26, 2015



**ANNUAL MEETING**

2015 | PHILADELPHIA

APRIL 18-22, 2015  
PENNSYLVANIA CONVENTION CENTER  
PHILADELPHIA, PA



**2015 AAPS National Biotechnology Conference**

June 8-10, 2015  
San Francisco Marriott Marquis  
San Francisco



**Blood-Brain Barrier**  
New Understanding, Strategies and Tools for Delivering Therapy to the Brain

June 10-11, 2015  
Westin Boston Waterfront, Boston, MA

Cambridge Healthtech Institute

CRS Annual Meeting & Exposition



CREATING VALUE THROUGH CUSTOMISED DELIVERY

Edinburgh, Scotland July 26-28, 2015



**PUT THIS on YOUR CALENDAR!**

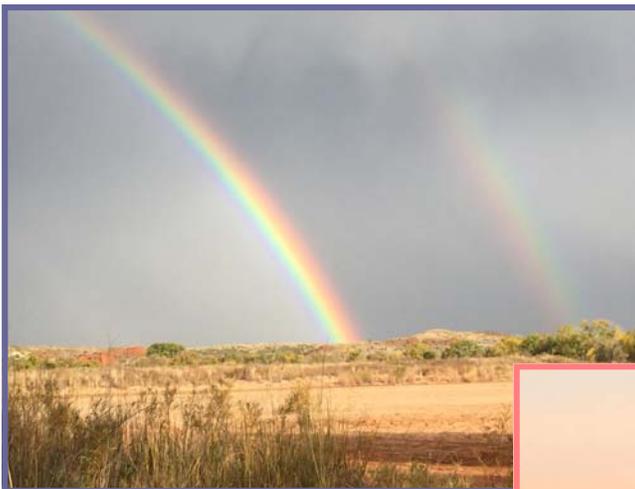
*TTUHSC Amarillo School of Pharmacy*  
**Fourteenth Annual Research Days Conference**  
~~~ June 11-12, 2015 ~~~  
*Amarillo Civic Center ~ Heritage Room*

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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 2015 SRW is "Host-Microbe Interactions: Exploring Worlds Within". Keynote speakers on March 10-13, 2015, will be: Steven Reed, Ph.D., Founder, President & Chief Scientific Officer of Infectious Disease Research Institute and Eugene Chang, M.D., Martin Boyer Professor, Department of Medicine, University of Chicago.

The ten-week 2015 Amarillo Biomedical Research Internship Program will begin May 26 and run through July 31. Application Deadline: **March 15, 2015.** Interested undergraduate students are encouraged to apply. Contact Teresa Carlisle by e-mail at [Teresa.Carlisle@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:Teresa.Carlisle@ttuhsc.edu).



**Double rainbow over Blue Creek near Lake Meredith, from Shyanne Page**



**Shyanne's garden pics**



**Sunset on the homestead, from Shyanne Page**



## ALUMNI DIRECTORY

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(Continued on page 11)

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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 2014) in:**

- \* Bowling
- \* American Heart Association, Heart Walk
- \* Barbeque Picnic
- \* Palo Duro Canyon Zipline
- \* Halloween Bash
- \* Ice Skating
- \* Clothing Drive, Salvation Army
- \* South Plains Food Bank Drive
- \* Salvation Army Thanksgiving Crafts
- \* Salvation Army Christmas Crafts
- \* Dr. Weis's Holiday Party

**Planned Community Events:**

- \* March of Dimes, March for Babies
- \* Salvation Army Volunteer Service

**Spring 2015 Social Events:**

- \* January—Bowling Night
- \* February—Movie Night
- \* March—Decade Disco Party
- \* April—Ski Trip, International Night
- \* May—Paintball



**Mohammad Kowser Miah** married Fahima Akter Munmun on 08/04/2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Born to Shannon and **Paul Trippier** on 08/27/2014, Emma Grace Trippier, 8 lbs 11 oz, 21"



Born to Xizhen Jiang and **Jiangjiang Qin** on 12/05/2014, Jeffrey Shijie Qin, 6.6 lbs, 20.1"

**GSAA  
Events**



**Bowling Night**



**American  
Heart  
Association  
Heart Walk**



**Ice Skating Party**

