

Agonist

Official Newsletter for the
Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Amarillo, Texas



Spring 2016
Issue 17

UPDATE FROM DR. AHSAN



This past fall, we started out by welcoming 10 new students – our largest group in quite some time. One of these, Ali Keshavarz, was our very first student from Iran to join the program, and is proving to be an excellent addition. We ended by preparing to say goodbye to four students who defended their Ph.D. dissertations. Sukesh, Neel, Raghu and Rashed are now Dr. Voruganti, Dr. Fofaria, Dr. Chivukula and Dr. Islam, respectively. Our highest congratulations to these four graduates as they launch their new careers! We saw several of our summer and fall 2015 graduates at the GSBS convocation ceremony in Lubbock on May 14th.

In October, we hosted the “2015 Annual AAPS TTUHSC School of Pharmacy Alumni and Friends Reception” at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando, Florida, where graduate school alumni and former faculty members from all over had an opportunity to meet and share new ideas with old acquaintances. We very much appreciate the continued support shown by our alumni!

In November, we hosted guest speaker Hugh Smyth, Ph.D., a Delgado Endowed Associate Professor in Pharmacy from the College of Pharmacy at the University of Texas in Austin. His presentation titled, “Engineering Devices and Molecules for Lung Delivery” provided invaluable information to equip our students with some of the most current technical knowledge available. His willingness to bring his expertise to our campus is especially appreciated. By the end of spring, our GPPS course seminars benefitted from an impressive lineup of six more invited and guest speakers, including: Gregory Bix, M.D., Ph.D., FAHA; Wei Li, Ph.D.; Jungkyu (Jay) Kim, Ph.D.; Fengtian Xue, Ph.D., FAHA; Insan Kim, Ph.D.; and one of our very own alumni, Kunal Taskar, Ph.D., joined us as our Alumni Guest Speaker for the Homecoming Presentation. Their outstanding credentials and input help to provide yet another dimension to the high level of training received by graduate students here at TTUHSC.

Nine of our graduate students made their presence known at national scientific meetings again this past fall, with research abstracts accepted by four distinguished organizations. Five presenters were selected to receive competitive, prestigious scholarships and awards to ensure attendance to share their valuable research. Our students have had eleven articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and were first author on ten of these. It is obvious that the value of their work is being recognized and well received in the scientific community.

In the midst of acquiring and presenting so much new technical information and knowledge, our students have still managed to involve themselves in such beneficial community and social events as the Women in Science Endeavors, the American Heart Association Amarillo Heart Walk, painting a house with Habitat for Humanity, a clothing drive to help warm up the winter, a picnic, bowling, several holiday gatherings and even a bit of photography. This displays commendable team work and camaraderie among our students, as well as some enjoyable hidden talents.

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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.

What's Inside

• Fall 2015 Graduates	2
• Spring 2016 Dissertations	
• New Students	
• GPPS Class of 2015-2016	3
• WiSE	
• Graduate Student Seminars	4
• Awards & Scholarships	
• Publications	5
• Conference Presentations	6
• AAPS	
• Alumni & Friends Reception	7
• Spring Conferences	
• SOP Research Days	
• SRW	8
• Alumni Directory	9, 10
• GSAA Events	10, 11, 12

FALL 2015 GRADUATES



Sukesh Voruganti, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Ruiwen Zhang

Dissertation Presented
August 19, 2015

"RYBP as a novel tumor suppressor and its implication in cancer therapy"



Neel Fofaria, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Sanjay K. Srivastava

Dissertation Presented
August 28, 2015

"Melanoma therapy with piperlongumine"

Raghavender Chivukula, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Jon Weidanz

Dissertation Presented
September 21, 2015

"Generation and characterization of novel antibodies targeting MHC peptide complexes and development of relevant oncology models for evaluation of immune independent/dependent anti-tumor mechanisms"



Mohammad Rashedul Islam, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Thomas Abbruscato

Dissertation Presented
October 14, 2015

"Neuroprotective function of novel bivalent and multivalent opioid peptide analogs in ischemic stroke models"



Kito Barrow, Lab of Dr. Junxuan (Johnny) Lu
Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at 3:00pm
AMASOP 335 / DALSW 433 / LUBHSC 1C100

Alejandra Fernandez, Lab of Dr. James Stoll
Wednesday, March 23, 2016 at 3:00pm
AMASOP 335 / DALSW 433 / ABISOP 2200 / LUBHSC 2C101

Spring 2016 DISSERTATIONS

NEW STUDENTS for Spring 2016



(L-to-R) Snehal Raut, Bader Huwaimel, Thamer Albekairi, Taylor Liles

Thamer Albekairi, B.Pharm.
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Saudi Arabia
Lab: Dr. Thomas Abbruscato

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**Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences
Class of 2015-2016**

WISE - Women in Science Endeavors

By Alejandra Fernandez & Shyanne Page

Women in Science Endeavors (WISE) hosts a science, technology, engineering and mathematics conference every year for middle-school girls from the Amarillo area. 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 "Wonder Woman," and it took place at Amarillo College on November 14.

Graduate students Alejandra Fernandez and Shyanne Page, with School of Pharmacy alumni Amanda Whiteside (class of 2015), conducted a workshop on compounding medications, where the girls made their own lotion. School of Pharmacy/GPPS alumni Sarah Willis (Class of 2013) and P2 Devan Craig led a second workshop to introduce the students to the practice side of pharmacy by helping them make lip balm and lozenges.



GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR PROGRAM - FALL 2016

08/19/15 - Sukesh Voruganti, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "RYBP as a novel tumor suppressor and its implication in cancer therapy"

08/26/15 - Faculty Speaker: Abraham Al-Ahmad, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pharmaceutical Sciences, TTUHSC SOP Amarillo - "So you got your Ph.D., that's nice... What's next?"

08/28/15 - Neel Fofaria, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Melanoma therapy with piper-longumine"

09/02/15 - Srinidhi Jayaraman - "Discovering Small Molecule Modulators for Endopeptidase Neurolysin (Hiking Toward Galaxies)"

09/16/15 - Nihar Kinarivala, Oral Qualifying Exam - "Synthesis and Structure Activity Relationship of Xanthohumol and its Analogues for the Treatment of Batten Disease"

09/21/15 - Raghavender Chivukula, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Generation and characterization of novel antibodies targeting MHC peptide complexes and development of relevant oncology models for evaluation of immune independent/dependent anti-tumor mechanisms"

09/23/15 - Benard Ogola, Oral Qualifying Exam - "Regulating Cholesterol Biosynthesis by Citrate Transporter Inhibitor 1,2,3-Benzenetricarboxylic Acid (BTC)"

09/28/15 - Md. Abul Kaisar - "Impact of Chronic E-Cigarette Exposure in Altered Medical Conditions"

09/30/15 - Kshitij Verma, Oral Qualifying Exam - "Selective AKR1C3 inhibitors for Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) therapy"

09/30/15 - Nehal Gupta - "Pseudolaric Acid B: A Potential Novel Chemotherapeutic Agent for Prostate Cancer"

10/14/2015 - Md. Rashedul Islam, Doctoral Dissertation Defense - "Neuroprotective Function of Novel Bivalent and Multivalent Opioid Peptide Analogs in Ischemic Stroke Models"

10/21/15 - Ahasanul Hasan - "A 3D Microfluidic Chip Mimicking the Blood Vessel: Fabrication and Preliminary Characterization"

10/21/15 - Hanumantha Rao Madala - "Design of a Rofecoxib-Combretastatin Hybrid Drug that Exerts Potent and Improved Antimicrotubule and Anti-Angiogenesis Properties Retaining COX-2 Inhibition"

11/04/15 - Ronak Patel - "Design of a patient and disease specific in-vitro model of the neurovascular unit using human induced pluripotent stem cells"

11/04/15 - Jee Hyun Park - "Internalization Study of T-Cell Receptor Mimic Antibody (TCRm)"

11/11/15 - Tanvirul Hye - "Targeting HER2-Positive Breast Cancer Brain Metastases with Lapatinib-Loaded Nanoemulsion"

11/11/15 - Alok Ranjan - "Penfluridol suppresses glioblastoma tumor growth by inhibiting sonic hedgehog signaling"

11/18/15 - Guest Speaker: Hugh Smyth, Ph.D., Delgado Endowed Professorship, Associate Professor in Pharmaceutics, College of Pharmacy, Editor in Chief, Drug Development and Industrial Pharmacy, University of Texas, Austin, TX -- "Engineering Devices and Molecules for Lung Delivery"

12/02/15 - Debasish Basak - "Redox-mediated inactivation of MGMT DNA repair sensitizes human gliomas to alkylating agents *in vitro* and *in vivo*"

12/02/15 - Sushanta Sarkar - "Novel Synthetic Makaluvamine against Lung Cancer"

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Neel Fofaria: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Endowed Scholarship, September 2015.

Tanvirul Hye: Travel Award, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists - Formulation Design and Development (FDD) Section, presented at Orlando, FL; October 2015.

Benard Ogola: Minority Travel Fellowship, American Physiological Society, Annapolis, MD; November 2015.

Alok Ranjan: Third Place, Carcinogenesis Specialty Section Graduate Student Award / Dharm V. Singh Carcinogenesis Endowment Award; March 2015.

Alok Ranjan: Scholar-in-Training Award, American Association for Cancer Research, Advances in Breast Cancer Research conference (supported by Susan G. Komen), Bellevue, WA, October 2015.

Md. Jahidur Rashid: Travelship, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists - Formulation Design and Development (FDD) Section, presented at Orlando, FL; October 2015.

Shikha (Prasad): Travelship, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists - Formulation Design and Development (FDD) Section, presented at Orlando, FL; October 2015.

Kshitij Verma: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Endowed Scholarship, September 2015.

PUBLICATIONS

≈**Fofaria NM**, Qhattal HS, Liu X, Srivastava SK. Nanoemulsion formulations for anti-cancer agent piplartine-Characterization, toxicological, pharmacokinetics and efficacy studies. *Int J Pharm.* 2015 Nov 28;498(1-2):12-22.

≈**Fofaria NM**, Frederick DT, Sullivan RJ, Flaherty KT, Srivastava SK. Overexpression of Mcl-1 confers resistance to BRAFV600E inhibitors alone and in combination with MEK1/2 inhibitors in melanoma. *Oncotarget.* 2015 Dec 1;6(38):40535-56.

≈Adkins CE, Nounou MI, **Hye T**, Mohammad AS, Terrell-Hall T, Mohan NK, Eldon MA, Hoch U, Lockman PR. NKTR-102 Efficacy versus irinotecan in a mouse model of brain metastases of breast cancer. *BMC Cancer.* 2015 Oct 13;15:685.

≈**Kaisar MA**, **Prasad S**, Cucullo L. Protecting the BBB endothelium against cigarette smoke-induced oxidative stress using popular antioxidants: Are they really beneficial? *Brain Res.* 2015 Nov 19;1627:90-100.

≈**Kinarivala N**, Trippier PC. Progress in the Development of Small Molecule Therapeutics for the Treatment of Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinoses (NCLs). *J Med Chem.* 2015 Nov 24.

≈**Miah MK**, Shaik IH, Bickel U, Mehvar R. Effects of Pringle maneuver and partial hepatectomy on the pharmacokinetics and blood-brain barrier

permeability of sodium fluorescein in rats. *Brain Res.* 2015 Aug 27; 1618:249-60.

≈**Naik P**, Cucullo L. Pathobiology of tobacco smoking and neurovascular disorders: untied strings and alternative products. *Fluids Barriers CNS.* 2015 Oct 31;12:25.

≈**Prasad S**, Cucullo L. Impact of Tobacco Smoking and Type-2 Diabetes Mellitus on Public Health: A Cerebrovascular Perspective. *J Pharmacovigil.* 2015 Nov;Suppl 2.

≈**Ranjan A**, **Fofaria NM**, Kim SH, Srivastava SK. Modulation of signal transduction pathways by natural compounds in cancer. *Chin J Nat Med.* 2015 Oct;13(10):730-42.

≈**Ranjan A**, Gupta P, Srivastava SK. Penfluridol: An antipsychotic agent suppresses metastatic tumor growth in triple negative breast cancer by inhibiting integrin signaling axis. *Cancer Res.* 2015 Dec 1. pii: canres.1233.2015. [Epub ahead of print]

≈**Voruganti S**, Xu F, Qin JJ, Guo Y, **Sarkar S**, Gao M, Zheng Z, Wang MH, Zhou J, Qian B, Zhang R, Wang W. RYBP predicts survival of patients with non-small cell lung cancer and regulates tumor cell growth and the response to chemotherapy. *Cancer Lett.* 2015 Sep 21. pii: S0304-3835(15)00582-0. [Epub ahead of print]



Amarillo sunset,
submitted by
Shyanne Page

*The Good, the Bad,
...and the Beautiful*



Monarch butterflies fill a pecan tree in Amarillo,
submitted by Shyanne Page



"UFO"- shaped thundercloud over Amarillo,
submitted by Shyanne Page

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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

AACR American Association
for Cancer Research

**Advances in Breast
Cancer Research**

October 17–20, 2015

Bellevue, Washington USA

Lead Supporter:

**SUSAN G.
KOMEN.**

American Association
for Cancer Research,
**Advances in Breast Cancer
Research Conference**

October 17-20, 2015 * Bellevue, WA

Alok Ranjan, Parul Gupta and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Brain metastasis of breast cancer suppression by penfluridol."

Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health,
Sex- and Gender-Based Medicine
& Women's Health Symposium
October 23, 2015 * TTUHSC Lubbock, TX

Page, Shyanne; Munsell, Alli; Patel, Ronak; Al-Ahmad, Abraham. "Adding the gender to the blood-brain barrier: modeling the human neurovascular unit using patient-derived induced pluripotent stem cells."

Laura W. Bush
INSTITUTE for WOMEN'S HEALTH
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER



APS Conference:
Cardiovascular, Renal and Metabolic
Diseases: Physiology and Gender
Annapolis, MD • November 17-20, 2015



Physiology
and Gender



American Physiological Society, Physiology and Gender
November 17-20, 2015 * Annapolis, MD

Benard Ogola, Yong Zang, Laxmi Iyer, and Thomas Thekkumkara. "Matrix Metallo-Proteinase 9 is Critical for 2-Methoxyestradiol Mediated Angiotensin Type 1 Receptor Down-Regulation."

2015 AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition

October 25-29, 2015

Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.

- ♦ **Ahasanul Hasan** and Fakhru Ahsan. "Masitinib—A Potential Candidate to be an Anti-Fibrotic Drug."
- ♦ **Tanvirul Hye**, Hussaini Qhattal, Xinli Liu. "Involvement of the Low-Density Lipoprotein Receptor-Related."
- ♦ **Mohammad R Islam**, Li Yang and Thomas J Abbruscato. "Pre-Clinical Therapeutic Time Profiling of Neuroprotectant Biphalin Using Ischemic Stroke Models."
- ♦ **Md. Abul Kaisar**, Shikha Prasad, Pooja Naik and Luca Cucullo. "Revealing the Facts on OTC Antioxidant Countermeasure Against Cigarette-Smoke-Induced Blood Brain Barrier Endothelial Damage."
- ♦ **Jahidur Rashid** and Fakhru Ahsan. "Repurposing of Oral Sildenafil for Inhalational Therapy in Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension."
- ♦ **Shikha Prasad**, Luca Cucullo. "Using Metformin to prevent Tobacco Smoke-induced BBB Endothelial Cell Dysfunction under Normal/Hyperglycemic Conditions."

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Celestin Youan, Quentin Smith

**2015 ANNUAL AAPS
TTUHSC SOP ALUMNI
& FRIENDS RECEPTION**
October 27 — 5:30-7:00pm
Hyatt Regency ~ Blue Spring
Orlando, Florida



Brijesh Patel, Tanvir Hye, Sharad Sharma



Ahasanul Hasan, Tanvir Hye



Shuhua Bai, Sami Nazzal, Prasad Chimalonkonda



Shuhua Bai and Mohammad Nutan

SPRING CONFERENCES



American Heart Association
life is why™
INTERNATIONAL STROKE CONFERENCE 2016
Stroke Nursing Symposium: February 16
ISC Pre-Conference Symposia: February 16
International Stroke Conference: February 17-19



Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation
10th ANNUAL DRUG DISCOVERY FOR NEURODEGENERATION CONFERENCE
An Educational Course on Translating Research into Drugs
March 6-8, 2016 • Miami, FL

SAVE THE DATE
GSBS Student Research Week 2016
March 8th - March 11th
Keynote Speaker,
Nobel Laureate: Dr. Capecchi



New Orleans, Louisiana
SOT + March 13-17, 2016
ToxExpo + March 14-16, 2016
SOT 2016 Annual Meeting
See you in New Orleans

AACR Annual Meeting
American Association for Cancer Research
2016 • NEW ORLEANS
April 16-20, 2016



FIFTEENTH ANNUAL
RESEARCH DAYS
JUNE 1-2, 2016 | Amarillo Civic Center - Heritage Room
Save the Date!



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER.
School of Pharmacy

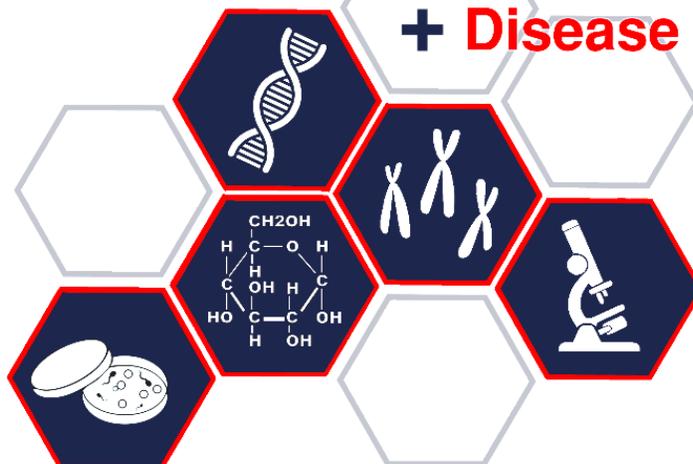
IMMUNOLOGY 2016™
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF IMMUNOLOGISTS
MAY 13 - 17 | AAI ANNUAL MEETING | SEATTLE, WA



CAS ANNUAL MEETING & EXPOSITION
July 17-20, 2016 • Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.



Molecular Basis of Life + Disease



Every year, students of the **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences** organize **Student Research Week (SRW)** to be held on the TTUHSC, Lubbock campus. Now in its 28th year, the theme for this upcoming SRW is **“Molecular Basis of Life & Disease.”** SRW 2016 was scheduled to take place on **March 8-11, 2016.**

This event will feature **keynote addresses** from two outstanding biomedical scientists:

Mario Capecchi, Ph.D.

Dr. Capecchi's pioneering work on targeted gene modification won him a **Nobel Prize** in 2007 with two other scientists. His research interests lie

in cancer and developmental biology. He is a Distinguished Professor in the Departments of Human Genetics and Biology at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City

Susan Amara, Ph.D.

Dr. Amara's research interests lie in understanding the structure-function relationship and physiology of neurotransmitter transporter proteins, which play important roles in neuropsychiatric disorders. Dr. Amara currently serves as the Scientific Director at the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Bala Purna, Ph.D. Candidate, Cell Biology and Biochemistry, TTUHSC Lubbock, Director of Student Research Week 2016, at bala-meenakshi.purna@ttuhsc.edu. For biographies on the speakers and keynote schedules, please visit <https://www.ttuhsc.edu/gsbbs/srw/seminars.aspx>.

*“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.
If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.”*

~ Herman Cain ~



**One frosty morning at the
Medi Park in Amarillo,
submitted by
Md. Rashedul ‘Rashed’ Islam**

*“I shall not pass through
this world but once.*

*Any good therefore that I can do
or any kindness that I can show to
any human being, let me do it now.*

*Let me not defer nor neglect it,
for I shall not pass this way again.”*

~ Stephen Grellet, 1855 ~

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*For more detailed information on an alumni OR for any changes/additions, please contact Teresa at Teresa.Carlisle@ttuhsc.edu.

GSAA BULLETIN BOARD

GPPS students participated Fall 2015 in:

September

Habitat for Humanity (volunteers)
GSAA Picnic

October

American Heart Association 2015 Amarillo Heart Walk
Pumpkin Carving Social

November

GSAA-SGA Clothing Drive
Bowling Night

December

GSAA-SGA Clothing Drive
GPPS Holiday Party
GSAA Zoo Lights Surprise Event

**Social & Community Events
Planned for Spring 2016:**

January

GSAA Journal Club (startup)
Movie Matinee

February

Bowling Night

March

Canned Food Drive
International Night

April

Ski Trip
Fundraiser for "Team Tatum"
March of Dimes—March for Babies

May

Graduation Party

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Student Events



**AHA 2015
Amarillo Heart Walk**



**Habitat
for
Humanity**



Picnic



**Pumpkin
Carving**



Bowling Night



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Student Events
(cont'd)

Holiday
Party



GSAA
Recognition

Zoo
Lights

