

PharmNews

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER -
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

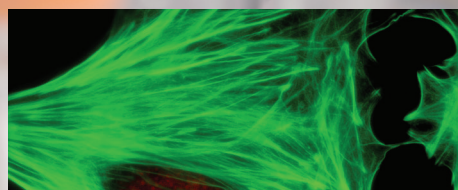
Kappa Psi finds Mr. Pharmacy

Page. 3



Grant Application Funding

Page. 2



Journal features work of Abilene faculty

A research project headed by Irene La-Beck, Pharm.D., recently found that a **nanoparticle** currently used in cancer patients caused tumors to grow in a preclinical tumor model, potentially offsetting the benefits of targeted drug delivery. The research paper describing these results is featured on the cover of the February issue of Nanomedicine: Nanotechnology, Biology, and Medicine, one of the **top journals** in the field.



La-Beck, an assistant professor for the SOP's Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology (DIB), said the research is significant because delivering drugs to tumors, while also avoiding drug delivery to normal tissue, remains a major challenge in the treating cancer.

"Nanoparticle carriers enable the targeting of drugs to tumors and decrease toxicity, although most have failed to improve patient survival," La-Beck explained. Members of La-Beck's research team for this project include DIB research associates Robin Rajan and Manoj Sabnani; Department of Biotechnology research assistant Vikram Mavinkurve; DIB Assistant Professor Laurence Wood, Ph.D.; Bradley Rowland, an undergraduate student from McMurry University; and Alberto Gabizon, M.D., Ph.D., director of experimental oncology at Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, Israel.

Student researcher earns scholarships, invitation

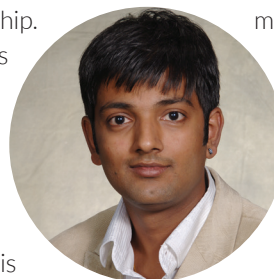
February was a big month for Neel Fofaria, a Ph.D. candidate in the SOP's Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

As the month got underway, the TTUHSC Student Government Association Phonathon Committee named Fofaria one of its recipients of a TTUHSC Endowed young investigators for their Phonathon Scholarship.

The scholarships are awarded in recognition of the student's involvement in school activities and community services and his or her demonstrated **leadership ability**.

Fofaria is president of the Graduate Student Association of Amarillo and the chair-elect for the Amarillo Chapter of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists. Later in the month, Fofaria received word that the American Association for Cancer

Research (AACR) awarded him an AACR-Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology Scholar-in-Training Award for the abstract he submitted for a presentation at the 2015 AACR Annual Meeting April 18-22 in Philadelphia. The awards recognize outstanding meritorious work in cancer research and are presented to **fewer than ten percent** of all applicants.



To close out the month, Fofaria was invited by the Bio2Device Group to speak at their March 31 meeting in Sunnyvale, California. He will present his research, "Overexpression of Mcl-1 confers resistance to BRAFV600E inhibitor therapy in melanoma." Fofaria works for the Department of Biomedical Sciences in laboratory of Sanjay Srivastava, Ph.D.

PHARMACY PRACTICE

Journal Publications

An article authored by Department of Pharmacy Practice faculty members Krystal Edwards, Pharm.D., associate professor in Dallas-Fort Worth, and Molly Minze, Pharm.D., assistant professor in Abilene, was published in the January edition of *Core Evidence*, a journal that evaluates the evidence underlying the potential place in therapy of drugs throughout their development lifecycle from preclinical to post-launch. The article is titled, "Dulaglutide: an evidence-based review of its potential in the treatment of type 2 diabetes."

DEPARTMENT OF IMMUNOTHERAPEUTICS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

Journal Publication

Aristotelis Astrinidis, Ph.D., an assistant professor for the Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology in Abilene, co-authored a paper published in *Cell Cycle*, a peer-reviewed journal covering cell biology. The paper, "Pharmacological inhibition of Polo-like kinase 1 (PLK1) by BI-2536 decreases the viability and survival of hamartin and tuberlin deficient cells via induction of apoptosis and attenuation of autophagy," appeared in Volume 14, Issue 3 of the journal.



Grad Student earns grant, poster award

Pooja Naik, a research assistant in the laboratory of Luca Cucullo, Ph.D., was awarded a pre-doctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association (AHA) that will provide her a \$25,000 stipend for each of the next two years.

Naik's grant, "Role of Nrf2 in Pathophysiology of Cerebral Stroke Following Tobacco Smoke Exposure," was one of 36 applications reviewed by the AHA Southwest Affiliate and one of just five to ultimately receive funding. Her grant submission was evaluated based upon the potential for her research to impact the AHA mission, her **academic achievements** and publication record and an evaluation of Cucullo's experience as a researcher, his training plan for Naik and the standards of his laboratory.

Thanks to a recently established GSBS incentive program, Naik will also receive an additional \$5,000 annual supplement from GSBS for generating her own salary funding through an external source.

"The AHA fellowship will definitely enhance my career," Naik added. "It will help transition me from a graduate student position into a career as an independent scientist."

In addition to her AHA grant, Naik recently received the Graduate Student Best Abstract Award for 2015 by the Association of Scientists of Indian Origin (ASIO). For her accomplishment, Naik brought home a plaque and a check from the ASIO reception held March 23 during the Society of Toxicology (SOT) 54th Annual Meeting in San Diego. The **award** is presented to students whose work supports toxicology research and is made possible by an ASIO Special Interest Group student award endowment fund established with SOT.

Dallas P3s fill special prescriptions

A group of Dallas P3 students enrolled in the Special Populations class spent a January evening filling 'jellybean prescriptions' for the polypharmacy simulation.

"We filled over 1,200 'prescriptions' that night," Assistant Professor Amie Blaszczyk said. "Our third-year students in the Special Populations course took a complicated eight-prescription regimen for one week and lived to tell about it."



Agencies recommend funding for grant applications

A pair of applications by SOP researchers could soon receive funding based upon recommendations made by the granting agencies to whom they were submitted. Magdelana Karbowniczek, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor for the SOP's Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology in Abilene, was informed by the U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs that her application for a Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Research Program Idea Development Award

was recommended for funding at a second-tier, programmatic review meeting based upon program goals and scientific merit. In addition, Fakhrul Ahsan, Ph.D., an associate professor for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences in Amarillo, received a favorable score on his RO1 grant application submitted to the National Institutes of Health. The project is titled, "Targetable and Inhalable Nanoparticle Based Combination Therapy for PAH." The most recent projections indicate the project could receive final funding approval from the NIH by April.



Abilene campus conducts health fair

The SOP campus in Abilene conducted its 2015 Spring Health Fair Feb. 7 as part of the West Texas Sports and Fitness Expo at the Abilene Civic Center.

SOP students provided health and wellness education activities geared toward children attending the expo. The activities included Using Glo Germ, a powder that glows under black light, to **teach the importance** of proper hand washing; identifying foods that help provide calcium to strengthen bones; a demonstration showing the quantity of sugars hiding in everyday drinks; teaching medication safety by identifying drugs and comparing them to some candies that have similar appearances;

sun and skin safety using sunscreen samples; and vaccination information.

The students also provided free blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol screenings to adults in attendance at the expo. A **donation** made to the SOP by Honda of Abilene covered the cost of booth rental and helped students reach out to the hundreds of Big Country residents who attended the event.

KAPPA PSI

Kappa Psi International Night

Students, faculty and staff gathered at the Hilton Garden Inn March 7 for the annual Kappa Psi International Night and Talent Show, sponsored by Walgreen's. Many of the students represented their native country by dressing in traditional clothing and by preparing food common to their culture.



TENURE

Faculty Receive Promotions, Tenure

The Texas Tech University System Board of Regents approved the promotion of three SOP faculty members and the promotion and tenure of two others. Promotions from assistant professor to associate professor were approved for Department of Pharmacy Practice faculty members Carlos Alvarez, Pharm.D. from the Dallas/Fort Worth campus; Molly Minze, Pharm.D., from Abilene; and Rebecca Sleeper Irons, Pharm.D., from Lubbock.

In addition, Xinli Lui, Ph.D., and Vardan Karamyan, Ph.D., were granted tenure and were promoted from assistant professor to associate professor. Both work for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences in Amarillo.

Kappa Psi finds 2015 Mr. Pharmacy-Amarillo

Friday the 13th was a lucky day at the Amarillo campus as Kappa Psi held its Second Annual Mr. Pharmacy-Amarillo Pageant. Last year's winner, P2 Abraham Amos, passed the crown to classmate Lee Congdon, who represented Double T. All proceeds were donated to Toys for Tots.



P3 students sit for annual HRDKA exam

The SOP's High Risk Drug Knowledge Assessment (HRDKA) was held Jan. 9 for all P3 students at all four SOP campuses. The HRDKA exam is a minimal competency exam that evaluates students' basic knowledge of the top 200 drugs utilized in hospital inpatient and outpatient settings. It is a required exam for all registered P3 students, who must score 75 percent

or higher to pass the test and progress into the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences section of the P4 curriculum.

The HRDKA exam is administered annually in January at all four campuses simultaneously and with the assistance from the regional deans and members of Student Assessment of Learning (SAL) committee.



Amarillo SOP students part of Texas Ramp Project

For the past several years, SOP preceptor Jim Ziolkowski, R.Ph., has organized volunteers to assist the Texas Ramp Project's Amarillo chapter in constructing wheelchair ramps for the low-income disabled in the Panhandle area. And since November, student volunteers from the SOP have spent several weekend afternoons showcasing their carpentry skills to help with the project.

On one such day in late January, 17 P1 students pooled their efforts to provide safe and easy access for an Amarillo resident. The group included Tuan Pham, Kathryn Johnson, Shannon Guevara, Brittani Lane, Cristal Zambrano, Robert Andrade, Tracy Lam, Jordan Bell, Carmen Ponce, Adanna Okere, Jennifer Kallon, Peia Lee, Omid Parviz, Malik Boukacem, Kira Monaco, Toni Cognasi and Philip Karimpanamannil.

Although all P1 students are required to work on a public service project, Johnson said volunteer work has been a part of her life since her undergraduate days in Lubbock when she helped her sorority sisters support the Children's Miracle Network.

"I also volunteer at the Amarillo Children's Home by tutoring the children," Johnson said. "I help them with any homework they are working on."

Pham also has volunteer experience, having helped with the local Snack Pac 4 Kids project. He has helped construct two of the three ramps in which SOP students have participated by sanding, drilling and cutting wood and then putting it all together to make platforms and handrails.

"I believe it is very important for individuals to get to where they need to be, whether it is as simple as going grocery shopping or something as vital as receiving health care," Pham said. "I'm very proud to have been a part of what the Texas Ramps Project has done for our community."

Johnson is also proud of the work she and her classmates have contributed to the Texas Ramp Project as representatives of the SOP.

"This project is important because it shows the community that TTUHSC School of Pharmacy is available to help as students and future healthcare professionals and that we are involved with helping the community," she added.



Resident hopefuls practice at Abilene campus

In January, six P4 students from the Abilene campus prepared for their upcoming post-graduate year one (PGY1) residency interviews by **practicing their interview skills**.

During the mock interviews, each student rotated through five sessions that included one-on-one interviews with a faculty member, group interviews with up to three faculty members and a group interview with PGY1 residents. The students also **submitted their curriculum vitae**, a complete list of residency positions to which they have submitted applications and a letter of intent for one of the residency positions.

Faculty and resident volunteers reviewed the material and individualized each interview. Each 30-minute interview period consisted of a 20- to 22-minute interview and an additional three to five minutes during which students were allowed to test some of their questions. The faculty and resident volunteers ended each interview session by providing verbal feedback to the students and then prepared a written evaluation sheet at the end of the day. The SOP's Dallas/Fort Worth campus has conducted mock residency interviews for the past several years, but this was the **first time** for the Abilene campus.

Faculty volunteers included Associate Dean and Associate Professor Debra Notturmo-Strong and Assistant Professors Jennifer Grelle, Pharm.D., Mary Klein, Pharm.D., Rebecca Mahan, Pharm.D., Chephra McKee, Pharm.D., Chris Tawwater, Pharm.D., Brian Terrell, Pharm.D. and Kayley Will, Pharm.D.

Resident volunteers included Jessica Garza, Pharm.D., Lillian May, Pharm.D., and Kathy Tang, Pharm.D.



SOP represents at stroke support group

Trista Bailey, Pharm.D., an assistant professor for the Department of Pharmacy Practice in Abilene and a clinical geriatric pharmacist, spoke to a stroke support group at the West Texas Rehabilitation Center of Abilene. Her presentation, titled, "Stroke and Hypertension: Living with the New Normal," included the warning signs of stroke, ways to modify one's diet, the effects of certain over-the-counter medications and managing prescription medicines associated with the **prevention of stroke**.

Several SOP faculty and students were also on hand to distribute informational pamphlets and to answer medication-related questions for support group members. The SOP contingent included Assistant Professor Becky Mahan, Pharm.D., from the Department of Pharmacy Practice and P4s Amin Nathani, Khumphan Amaratana, Cindy Huynh, Mattie Whisenant and Saeed Alzghari.



Graduation

9:00 a.m. - Brunch
11:30 a.m. - Ceremony
Amarillo Civic Center

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