Arumugam Received New Funding

Garrie Arumugam, Ph.D., the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences newest faculty member, recently received funding through American Associations of Colleges of Pharmacy as well as the National American Heart Association. The AACP grant will fund one year of research for: The resident inflammatory brain cells, microglia, are activated in response to ischemic insults and produce inflammatory mediators, many of which are regulated by NFkappaB. The released cytokines and oxygen radicals not only damage neurons but also trigger reactive gliosis that can adversely impact neuronal survival. As Notch-1 signaling is required to sustain the transcriptional activity of NFkappaB, we will determine whether Notch-1 signaling influences NFkappaB regulated inflammation in microglia.

Dr. Arumugam’s National AHA grant will support 4 years of research dealing with: Ischemic stroke is a devastating disease that represents the third leading cause of death in the United States. Ischemic stroke causes damage and death of neurons in the perfusion territory of the affected blood vessel. The neurodegenerative mechanism involves metabolic and oxidative stress, excitotoxicity, apoptosis and inflammatory processes including glial cell activation and infiltration of activated leukocytes. Notch-1 is a cell surface receptor that regulates cell fate decisions in the developing nervous system and may also play roles in synaptic plasticity in the adult brain. The PI recently identified the contribution of Notch-1 activation to brain ischemic injury. The PI and colleagues showed that Notch-1 antisense (NAS)...

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SOP Faculty Honored for Teaching & Research

The seventh annual Chancellor’s Council Distinguished Teaching and Research Awards were given on Thursday, December 6, 2007 at the Texas Tech University Campus in Lubbock. Two Amarillo School of Pharmacy Pharmaceutical Sciences faculty were proud recipients: Dr. Jon Weidanz and Dr. Thomas Thekkumkara. Recipients of each award were invited to attend the annual black tie dinner on Friday, December 14, 2007.

Dr. Weidanz received the Chancellor’s Council Distinguished Teaching Award. Also this year, he was the recipient of the President’s Excellence in Teaching Award and has won numerous School of Pharmacy Teacher of the Year Awards in the past. He has been with the Tech Family for seven years. Dr. Weidanz recently relocated his cancer therapy research to the new Abilene campus.

Dr. Thekkumkara was the recipient of the Chancellor’s Council Distinguished Research Award. Also, he recently received the President’s Research Achievement Award. Dr. Thekkumkara has been the TTUHSC SOP since 2000. His research is based on blood pressure regulation and electrolyte balance.

Director of Lipid Enzymology Laboratory Guest Speaker at SOP

Paul Watkins, M.D. Ph.D., Director of the Lipid Enzymology Laboratory at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Professor of Neurology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine will be at the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy on February 5-6, 2008. Dr. Watkins performs research in the area of childhood X-linked adrenoleukodystrophy (XALD) and related genetic diseases. XALD is a myelin destroying disease in which patients are unable to break down long-chain fatty acids. Due to their toxicity, patients have significant health problems, including mental retardation and paralysis. Dr. Watkins laboratory works to understand the biochemical basis of these diseases.

Dr. Watkins will be delivering a basic research seminar on February 5th at 4p.m. in the Harrington Lecture Hall. On February 6th, he will be conducting the weekly Medical Grand Round. Please join us for this exciting and informative event! You can also find additional information on myelin degenerating disease at http://www.myelin.org/.
A Meeting of the Minds

December 7, 2007 was an exciting day for faculty, postdocs, graduate students and undergraduate students from TTUHSC, as well as UT El Paso, the Garrison Institute on Aging, and the South Plains Alcohol and Addiction Research Consortium. The West Texas Regional Society for Neuroscience meeting was a day-long event in which attendees had the opportunity to attend talks, discuss research and observe poster presentations. Three internationally know scientists also presented research. Guests included David S Miller, Ph.D.: head of the Intracellular Regulation Group, Ingolf Balsig, Ph.D.: Head of Molecular Cell Physiology at Leibniz- Institut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP), and Paula Grammas, Ph.D.: Executive Director or the Garrison Institute on Aging. Presentations included subjects such as Blood-Brain Barrier, Alzheimer’s disease, and controlling p-Glycoprotein.

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Dr. Eugene Shek has been elected to serve as Secretary in the AACP, Biological Sciences Section for 2008. His appointment will take place at the 2008 AACP General meeting in Chicago, IL.

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Names in the News

Graduate Student, Erika Wisdom, received a travel award from the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to attend Experimental Biology 2008 in San Diego, California. The meeting will be held April 2008.

Dr. Eugene Shek has been elected to serve as Secretary in the AACP, Biological Sciences Section for 2008. His appointment will take place at the 2008 AACP General meeting in Chicago, IL.

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**First CATALYST Seminar**

On Thursday, December 20th, the first open discussion of the seminar series “CATALYST” was held. Dr. US Rao opened his discussion titled “Why not RNF2 now? It’s interesting too.” This Research Catalyst was set up to cater to an open forum in which the presentations and discussions were informal. Faculty members participated in an eye opening discussion of Dr. Rao’s ongoing research. This series possesses the possibility of inter-laboratory collaboration as well as the opportunity for the PI to receive outside the laboratory views/ideas. CATALYST seminars will be held every 3rd Thursday of the month beginning at 5:30p.m.; the Office of Research will host dinner. If you have questions or you would like to participate in the next CATALYST, please contact Logan LaRue for more information.

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**Names in the News**

Graduate Student, Sharanya Ve-mula, received a travel award to attend an AAPS Workshop on Enzyme and Transporter Based Drug Interaction in November 2007. The Program was held in San Diego, California.

Graduate Student, Nikhil Vad received a travel award from AstraZeneca to attend the 2007 AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition. The meeting was held November 11-15 in San Diego, California.

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**Center for Immunotherapeutic Research**

The Texas Tech University Board of Regents approved the School of Pharmacy’s new center for excellence in Abilene. The Center for Immunotherapeutic Research will be a partnership between the Abilene community and the TTUHSC in which PIs will conduct translational and clinical research. The mission of the center includes improving the healthcare of people through the development and implementation of novel immune-based approaches/methods to detect/treat human diseases. It will feature technologies such as gene expression and protein engineering, hybridoma generation for monoclonal antibodies, microscopy and flow-cytometry, along with others. A Human Immunology Core (HIC) will provide support for immune monitoring of participating patients in clinical trials focused on cancer treatment and immune interventions. The Center hopes to collaborate with UT Southwestern in their research endeavors.

This will be the first Center for Excellence on the new Abilene campus. The Center is currently establishing its research infrastructure, and has just named Dr. Jon Weidanz as the Director. A five year plan to build a strong, self-sustainable center with the goal to obtain new extramural funding and recruit new center faculty has been submitted.
Seminars


Katie Bennett, Graduate Student/Research Assistant. Monday, November 5, 2007. SOP Room 107. “Expression and characterization of the novel transporter orthologs, BOCT1 and BOCT2.”


Student Research Week in Lubbock

The 20th annual Student Research Week will be held on the TTUHSC Lubbock campus March 11-14, 2008. This is a wonderful occasion for students to practice presentational skills and meet with other TTU/TTUHSC students. This opportunity also allows students to showcase their original clinical and/or basic science research. This year’s event will feature Fertilization, but is open to all fields of research. There will be nationally renowned scientists in the area of reproductive technology as featured guest speakers. Students who attend will have the opportunity to compete for scholarship prizes up to $1000. If additional information is need, please contact Kim Chau in the GSBS office at 806-743-2556.
**Publications**


Lockman PR, Manda VK, Geldenhuys WJ, Mittapalli RK, Thomas F, Albayati ZF, Crooks PA, Dwoskin LP, Allen DD. Carrier-mediated transport of the quaternary ammonium neuronal nicotinic receptor antagonist, N, N'-dodecylbis-picolinium dibromide (bPiDDB) at the blood-brain barrier. J Pharmacol Exp Ther. 2007 Oct 5.

