

PharmNews

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER -
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

SPRING 2016

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School of Pharmacy Faculty Earn Promotions

The Texas Tech University System Board of Regents recently approved promotions for seven School of Pharmacy faculty members.

Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences faculty member Fakhru Ahsan, Ph.D., from the Amarillo campus and Steven Pass, Pharm.D., from the Department of Pharmacy Practice in Dallas, were promoted from associate professor to professor.

Ahsan, who was named a University Distinguished Professor in 2015, also serves as advisor for the Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences. Pass serves as vice chair for the School of Pharmacy residency programs.

Four Department of Pharmacy Practice faculty members were also promoted from assistant professor to associate professor. The group includes Pamela Ochoa, Pharm.D., and José Vega, Pharm.D., from the Abilene campus; Lisa Chastain, Pharm.D., from the Dallas campus; and Janie Robles, Pharm.D., from the Lubbock campus.

In addition, Claudia Meek, Ph.D., from the Department of Pharmacy Practice in Dallas, was promoted from research assistant professor to research associate professor.

"We want to celebrate this achievement with our faculty," School of Pharmacy Dean Quentin Smith, Ph.D., said. "They went through a very thorough and demanding review process and performed extremely well. They are certainly deserving of our praise for their efforts and achievements."

Abilene opens new Health Center

The Abilene Community Health Center (ACHC), a satellite clinic of the Larry Combest Community Health and Wellness Center in Lubbock, officially rolled out its welcome mat Dec. 16 with a ribbon cutting and open house.

Though ACHC is primarily associated with the TTUHSC School of Nursing, it also provides an inter-professional practice site that includes two clinical pharmacists—School of Pharmacy assistant professors Kayley Will, Pharm.D., and Mary Klein, Pharm.D. Will and Klein work with Sharon Cates, F.N.P., and supervising physician Allen Schultz, M.D., to issue therapeutic recommendations, provide patient education for disease states and medications, administer vaccines and point-of-care tests and evaluate lab results.

Will said pharmacy and nursing students from the TTUHSC campus in Abilene do clinical rotations through the ACHC.

"The pharmacy students help with medication reconciliation, answer drug information questions and provide patient education," Will said. "The clinic provides access to comprehensive health services to those in need. We also try to reduce or eliminate health disparities among high risk populations and integrate student clinical experiences and faculty practice to effectively deliver health care services."

ACHC is a federally qualified health center with an on-site laboratory that offers a range of services, including annual exams, immunizations, STD testing, contraception, pregnancy testing and minor injury care. ACHC accepts Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance and there is a sliding-scale fee schedule for the uninsured.

"We are a family practice clinic that provides disease management and primary care services to all patients, from infants to the elderly," Will added.



School names 2014-2015 Preceptors of the Year

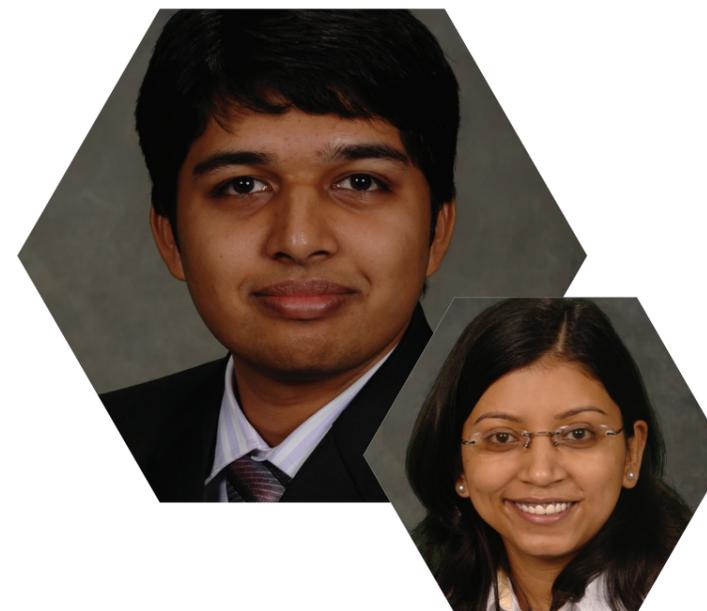
Each year, the School of Pharmacy honors one faculty member and one adjunct faculty member from each campus community with a Preceptor of the Year Award. The Office of Experiential Programs reviews preceptor evaluations submitted by students and then determines the top five faculty preceptors and top five adjunct preceptors from each campus. The third- and fourth-year students then vote for one faculty and adjunct faculty finalist from their respective campus.

2014-2015 Adjunct Faculty Preceptors of the Year:

- **Wesley Hood, Pharm.D.** - San Angelo Medical Center (Abilene)
- **Julie Edwards, R.Ph.** - CVS (Dallas/Fort Worth)
- **Patty Luera, Pharm.D.** - Texas Specialty Hospital (Lubbock)

2014-2015 Faculty Preceptors of the Year:

- **Chris Tawwater, Pharm.D.** (Abilene)
- **Sherry Luetke, Pharm.D.** (Amarillo)
- **Kalin Clifford, Pharm.D.** (Dallas/Fort Worth)
- **Leslie Monye, Pharm.D.** (Lubbock)



Amarillo Grad students named Dean's Scholar Award honorees

The TTUHSC Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences has selected Nihar Kinarivala and Mrs. Shikha to receive the Dean's Scholars Award. Kinarivala and Shikha are Ph.D. candidates for the School of Pharmacy's Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

The Dean's Scholars Award recognizes outstanding Ph.D. and M.D./Ph.D. students who have shown exceptional academic ability and potential for research excellence, as evidenced by their GPA, GRE, meeting abstracts, presentations and publications and other earned awards. Recipients receive a \$5,000 increase to their annual research assistantship salary for the duration of their doctoral degree.

Kinarivala works as a research assistant in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences laboratory of Paul Trippier, Ph.D. Shikha works as a research assistant in the lab of Luca Cucullo, Ph.D, also with the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.



Student group volunteers at NWTHS

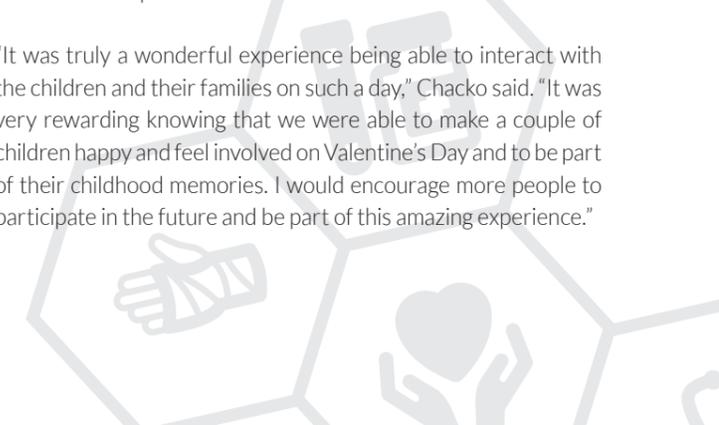
Students from the Texas Tech Pediatric Pharmacy Advocacy Group (TTPPAG) at the School of Pharmacy took some time Feb. 12 to help children at Northwest Texas Hospital System (NWTHS) make Valentine's Day cards and crafts.

First-year pharmacy student Rincy Chacko helped organize the effort. She said TTPPAG was inspired to participate in the project after one of their members heard from the mother of a child who was being treated at NWTHS.

"She shared how the kids who stay at the hospital on special occasions often feel left out and isolated from the outside world and miss the fun experiences and festivities other children their age encounter," Chacko said. "This talk from a concerned parent is what inspired me to look into volunteering with the children at the hospital and spending time with them as often as we can. I wanted to find a way to make them feel special and let the children know there are people who care about them and are willing to spend time with them no matter what."

Chacko said TTPPAG volunteers and the children also made cards and crafts for NWTHS staff that were busy or not on duty that day, and for the newborns, infants and toddlers who will be patients on the pediatric unit in the future.

"It was truly a wonderful experience being able to interact with the children and their families on such a day," Chacko said. "It was very rewarding knowing that we were able to make a couple of children happy and feel involved on Valentine's Day and to be part of their childhood memories. I would encourage more people to participate in the future and be part of this amazing experience."



Pharmacy students discuss Rx drug dangers at local schools



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimates that each day in the U.S., approximately 2,500 children aged 12 years or older try a prescription drug recreationally for the first time. Generation Rx, a group of future pharmacists from the American Pharmacists Association student organization at the School of Pharmacy, is helping to raise awareness about this epidemic of prescription drug abuse that exists in the country today.

Since the school year began in August, Generation Rx has reached out to roughly 1,700 elementary, middle school and high school students throughout Amarillo using video presentations and puppet shows to educate about the dangers and consequences of prescription drug abuse. The photo is from their Feb. 5 presentation at DeZavala Middle School.

Abilene students helping local outreach effort

Several years ago, a group of Abilene women began an outreach program by renovating a 19th-century house in the city that had fallen on hard times. Once the repairs were complete, the landmark—known as the Palm House—became a neighborhood beacon of hope maintained by a group whose mission is to provide people with the practical and spiritual tools necessary to have a fulfilling life and cultivate a divine relationship.



Eventually, the Palm House started offering a Sunday meal to feed some of the less fortunate people in the area and to encourage neighborhood fellowship. Today, that tradition that initially served five people has blossomed into an event that feeds more than 100 of Abilene's hungry and homeless each Sunday evening. Abilene assistant professors Kayley Will, Pharm.D., and Jennifer Grelle, Pharm.D., learned about the Palm House and shared the group's vision with the Texas Tech Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists and American Pharmacists Association student organizations. In April, those students and members of two other School of Pharmacy student organizations—Christian Pharmacists' Fellowship International and the Translational Research Interest Group—will join forces to prepare and serve a Palm House Sunday meal. Alexandria Ybarra, a second-year (P2) student, said the first step was to raise funds to purchase the necessary supplies for the Sunday meal, including everything from paper plates and napkins to food and beverages. Their solution was to partner with a local restaurant, the Hashi Teppan Grill, to conduct a profit share.

"Thanks to the support of the Hashi Grill, our fellow students, the community and our staff and faculty we were able to raise \$400 in just a few hours and exceed our original goal," Ybarra said. "Following our fundraiser, word of the great need and worthiness of this cause quickly spread on campus and students in other organizations asked to volunteer their time and efforts. We are all excited and look forward to preparing and serving the meal to Abilene's hungry."

Ybarra and classmate Tammy Nguyen are the primary organizers for the meal preparation. Ybarra said P1 Lydia Halim-Girgis suggested providing toiletries and hygiene products as part of the students' efforts, so any funds remaining after the meal supplies are purchased, and any items donated by local pharmacies or collected on the Abilene campus, will also go toward providing those products. Ybarra, who is from Yorktown, Texas, has always enjoyed performing volunteer work. Prior to moving to Abilene, she served as a junior board member for her hometown chamber of commerce and economic development council, helping to design and carry out fundraising and educational efforts, promote historical initiatives and plant wildflowers. Since moving to Abilene as an undergrad student at Hardin-Simmons, she has volunteered for a local animal shelter, the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Meals on Wheels and her favorite cause, the Special Olympics.

Nguyen has also seen the impact one can make as a volunteer. Prior to enrolling in pharmacy school she spent two years serving as a mentor for elementary students in a high needs school district. She said the program emphasized the importance of providing students with the attention that they may not receive at home or individually in the classroom. As pharmacy students Ybarra and Nguyen said they are often focused on ways they can give back to the community through clinical patient care services like checking blood glucose levels and educating the youth about prescription drug misuse and abuse.

"Because we are future health care professionals, we are often looked upon as leaders in our community and I feel we need to seek every way we can to make a contribution," Ybarra added. "When this opportunity with the Palm House was presented to us we were very excited to be able to volunteer our time and efforts in a different way from our norm and we are humbled to be able to aid such a worthy cause and help feed those less fortunate. The project is important, not only for the good that it will do for the community, but as a reminder to our students about the many ways they can give back and serve."



Smith accepts check from Walgreens Diversity Initiative

School of Pharmacy Dean Quentin Smith, Ph.D., received a \$10,000 check from the Walgreens Diversity Initiative via Walgreens representative Jason Voles. The money will help the school promote diversity in recruiting and will also be used to help fund the school's annual International Night, an event held during the spring to showcase the diverse cultural backgrounds of School of Pharmacy students, faculty and staff.

Grad students pick up awards, scholarships



Four graduate students from the School of Pharmacy's Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences were recently recognized for their research efforts.

- Alok Ranjan, a research assistant working for the Department of Biomedical Sciences in the laboratory of Sanjay Srivastava, Ph.D., received the 2016 Graduate

Student Best Abstract Award from the Association of Scientists of Indian Origin (ASIO) at the ASIO Annual Reception during the Society of Toxicology Annual Meeting Mar. 13-17 in New Orleans.



- Nihar Kinarivala and Ronak Patel, research assistants for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, have been selected to receive an Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation Outstanding Young Investigator Scholarship. This very competitive scholarship is awarded to only five applicants from all over the world.

Kinarivala and Patel officially received their scholarships Mar. 6-8 at the Tenth Annual Drug Discovery for Neurodegeneration Conference: An Educational Course on Translating Research into Drugs. Kinarivala works in the laboratory of Paul Trippier, Ph.D. Patel works in the



laboratory of Abraham Al-Ahmad, Ph.D., with the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

- R.K. Samala has been selected to receive a \$2,500 travel scholarship to attend the PK/PD Modeling

Course May 16-18 at The Niagara Falls Conference Center in Niagara Falls, New York. The scholarship is offered by the Buffalo Clinical and Translational Science Award Hub, which is funded by the National Institutes of Health-National Center for Advancing Translational Science. Samala is a research assistant professor working in the lab of Quentin Smith, Ph.D.



Second Dallas health fair scheduled; student recognized



The second annual Let the Music Move You! Health Fair, hosted by the Dallas Student Council-School Recognition Committee, is slated for 10 a.m.-2 p.m. April 9 at the Roseland Boys & Girls Club in Dallas. P4 Cindy Adibe founded the event in 2014 after being inspired by first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative, which seeks to raise childhood obesity awareness.



"We will collaborate with medical students, dental students, pharmacy students from the University of North Texas and other pre-healthcare students in the DFW area to provide education and health screenings for patients," Adibe said. "The Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health has graciously offered to sponsor part of the event."

Adibe said approximately 75 children from a single boys and girls club attended the first health fair in 2014. This year the event is expanding to include all Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas and she expects at least 150 kids to attend.

"We are seeking to shed light on the epidemic of childhood obesity, provide an opportunity for the TTUHSC School of Pharmacy to enhance its branding and recognition in Dallas and promote the pharmacy profession," Adibe said.

In February, Adibe was the only TTUHSC pharmacy student to receive the TTUHSC Legacy Award at the 2016 Graduation Dinner hosted by the Our Legacy Now Student Foundation. She received the honor in recognition of the legacy of service she is leaving behind at TTUHSC and for her overall service to the School of Pharmacy, the community and the pharmacy profession. She also received graduation cords for her service as a 2015-16 TTUHSC President's Select Ambassador at the same event.

"I hope to inspire other students to go above and beyond the academic curriculum to demonstrate leadership and service," Adibe said. "It was an honor to be peer-nominated and recognized for my hard work for these past four years."

Study results published by prestigious journal

Results from a study conducted by Sanjay K. Srivastava, Ph.D., a professor in the School of Pharmacy's Department of Biomedical Sciences, were published in the Feb. 15 issue of *Cancer Research*, the most frequently cited cancer journal in the world. Alok Ranjan, the study's lead author, and Parul Gupta are graduate students in the same department and worked with Srivastava on the study.

According to a 2011 report prepared by the Greater Amarillo Affiliate of Susan G. Komen For the Cure, the breast cancer mortality rate for 25 of 26 Texas Panhandle counties exceeds national and state rates. Metastasis of breast cancer, especially to the brain, is the major factor in the mortality rate and Srivastava said triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) is a very aggressive form of the disease. Once the cancer reaches brain, there are almost no treatment options available.

Srivastava said researchers looking for a successful treatment to halt metastasis to the brain have been thwarted by the inability of anticancer agents to cross the blood-brain-barrier (BBB). Because of this, he said metastatic TNBC is very difficult to treat and patient survival rates are poor. To combat this challenge, Srivastava and his research team have been studying ways to bypass the BBB and prevent the metastasis process that is so often fatal.

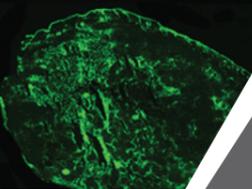


"We know that anti-psychotic drugs do reach the brain, and so we screened several of these drugs and found penfluridol to be effective in suppressing the growth of various TNBC cells," Srivastava said. "We demonstrated that oral administration of penfluridol suppresses the growth of breast tumors in the brain in various tumor models, and interestingly, we observed that some of the proteins, which are overexpressed in breast tumors and play role in metastasis, were also suppressed by penfluridol treatment."

Srivastava said long-term treatment with penfluridol also did not appear to cause any toxicity or behavioral side effects.

"Penfluridol is currently given to patients with schizophrenia, though few studies have suggested that schizophrenic patients have reduced risk of cancer," he added. "Since penfluridol is already in clinic, positive findings from our study will accelerate its clinical development and be helpful for patients with aggressive and metastatic breast cancer."

Cancer Research
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Amarillo students have fun, raise funds

March was a busy month for student organizations at the School of Pharmacy campus in Amarillo.

The fun began March 4 when first-year (P1) pharmacy student Ugonna Egbuchulam, representing the Student National Pharmaceutical Association student organization, took home the trophy and sash from the School of Pharmacy's Third Annual Kappa Psi Mr. Pharmacy Pageant. Second-year student Alex Tran, who was entered as the Class of 2018 candidate, was voted Mr. Popular. P1 Hannah Thompson kept the crowd on their toes as emcee.

On March 5, the Foundation for the International Medical Relief of Children held their 2016 3-on-3 basketball tournament to raise money for their summer mission trip. The following weekend, the American Pharmacists Association sponsored a dodge ball tournament and Phi Delta Chi held its annual Casino Night to raise money for St. Jude Children's Hospital.



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