TSHP Seminar Yields Awards for Leadership, Research, Skills and Mentorship

Two UH College of Pharmacy Ph.D. students recently earned national awards for their research presentations at the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy and the American Pharmacists Association annual meetings.

**Bilqees Fatima**, Pharm.D., M.S., received the Best Poster Award in the Graduate Student category at AMCP 2023 March 21-23 in San Antonio for her retrospective study of medication nonadherence factors among older adult atrial fibrillation (AF) patients.

Fatima’s research confirmed one-year adherence among DOAC users is suboptimal, but the identified predictors of nonadherence, such as low-income subsidy and age, should be taken into consideration when developing future interventions.

The study was co-authored by Anjana Mohan, Ph.D., a recent UHCOP graduate and current observational research manager at Amgen, and faculty advisor Susan Abughosh, Ph.D., UHCOP professor.

At the 2023 APhA Meeting in Phoenix, fellow Ph.D. student **Olajumoke Olateju** was honored with the Best Podium Presentation Award for her study into the trends and barriers to first-line treatment with immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICI).

Immunotherapy treatment is now considered the standard of care in metastatic melanoma patients, yet it continues to be underutilized among traditionally underserved patient populations. The study found that a patient’s socioeconomic status can act as a barrier when attempting to utilize immunotherapy.

Co-authors of the study were fellow Ph.D. student Zhen Zeng and faculty members E. James Essien, M.D., DrPH, Osaro Mghere, Ph.D., M.S., MPH, and Douglas Thornton, Ph.D., Pharm.D.

**Amrita Kanwar**, Pharm.D., Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center PGY1 resident/ UHCOP student in The Houston Program (THP), received an Honorable Mention in the poster competition’s PGY1 Resident/Fellow/Post-Graduate category for “Evaluation of rituximab prescribing patterns in a quaternary academic medical center.” Project co-authors were alumna Kimberly Putney, Pharm.D., MPH, St. Luke’s Health pharmacy manager and HSPAL director, and Raymond Yau, Pharm.D., St. Luke’s Health clinical pharmacy specialist-liver transplant.

**Tien Pham** was a member of the first-place P4 Category team in the Clinical Skills Competition.

**Divya Varkey**, Pharm.D., M.S., UHCOP clinical associate professor and college director of THP, received the Pharmacy Mentor Award and presented the Joyce A. Tipton Leadership Lecture created in honor of longtime pharmacy leader and UHCOP alumna Joyce Tipton, B.S., MBA, FASHP.

Success and sand were in the mix as UHCOP student and faculty were honored at the 2023 Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists Annual Seminar April 21-23 in Galveston.

For a second consecutive year, a UHCOP team – including three repeat members – won the TSHP Research & Education Foundation Leadership Challenge for its proposals aimed at reducing vacancies/preventing turnover, boosting morale and job satisfaction, and expanding and diversifying career ladders within pharmacy technician ranks.

Pharm.D. candidate **Isabella Serrato** won the Research Poster Competition-Student category for her presentation, “Quality Improvement Project: Impact Of Pharmacist-Led Medication Reconciliation In The Pediatric Camp Setting.” Project co-authors were alumni Briget Martinez, Pharm.D., BCPPS, MASPHM, DHR Health pediatric clinical pharmacy specialist/UHCOP clinical assistant professor, and Katy Oliveira, Pharm.D., DHR Health pharmacist.

**Members of the winning Leadership Challenge team were Emmanuel Iruuru, Dana Elder, Adam Siddique and Michael Torano.**
The UHCOP Chapter of the Industry Pharmacists Organization took home the bronze medal for its innovative development in the Value of Industry Pharmacists Case Competition, marking the team’s second third-place finish in the past three years.

Adam Siddique, Pharm.D. student, has been appointed to the 2023-24 Pharmacy Student Forum Executive Committee of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

Jennifer Lee and Elizabeth Nguyen, third-year Pharm.D. students, won first place in the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) Region III, IV & V Conference Clinical Skills Competition, with Van Vo and Connie Lau, second-year Pharm.D. students, placing third. In addition, the UHCOP SNPhA Chapter won the “Man-Mile Award,” which is based on the number of members in attendance and the distance traveled to the host city.

UHCOP and the Phi Lambda Sigma Pharmacy Leadership Society Upsilon Chapter welcomed Thomas Roduta, Pharm.D., M.S., BCPS, Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center pharmacy operations manager and The Houston Program alumnus, for his presentation at the 2023 James T. McCarty Leadership Lecture.

The Hispanic Pharmacy Student Association was recognized with the Outstanding Program Award by the UH Center for Student Involvement’s 38th Annual Campus Leaders Ceremony April 19 for its work reducing vaccine hesitancy in Houston’s Hispanic community.

Rudesha Sanders, second-year Pharm.D. student, has accepted one of 40 slots at the 2023 NCPA Foundation-University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Pharmacy Ownership and Leadership Academy in Little Rock, Ark. The week-long academy will prepare attendees for owning a pharmacy, leadership development and practices for the NCPA Business Plan competition.

The P-HOPER Center is led by Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D., FAPhA, director, and Hua Chen, M.D., Ph.D., assistant director.

who also serves as assistant director; Susan Abughosh, Ph.D., professor; E. James Essien, DrPH, M.D., professor; and Jeffrey Sherer, Pharm.D., BCGP, clinical professor.

The center is the first of its kind in the nation to study population health outcomes through the lens of pharmacoepidemiology, as most population health centers in the U.S. geared toward overall public health perspectives.

Aparasu said the center is uniquely positioned to strengthen the partnership between public health and pharmacy, help remove the barriers to collaborations, and promote the integration of population-based pharmaceuticals outcomes assessment into community health needs assessments, disease surveillance, and monitoring of health outcomes.
Kumar Receives $2.7M NIH Grant for Muscle Wasting Study

Ashok Kumar, Ph.D., Else and Philip Hargrove Endowed Professor and chair of the Department of Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences, received a five-year, $2,758,100 National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease grant to examine the TWEAK/Fn14 system in skeletal muscle wasting during aging and cancer cachexia.

Kumar hopes to identify mechanisms that could lead to the developing therapeutic approaches to prevent muscle wasting. Co-investigators of this project include UHCOP faculty member Michael Johnson, Ph.D., and Moores professor in the UH College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Preethi Gunaratne, Ph.D.

Diana S-L. Chow, Ph.D., Paula & John J. Lovoi Sr. Endowed Professor in Drug Discovery and Development, was honored as the University of British Columbia’s Pharmaceutical Sciences Alumni Agent of Change, which recognizes UBC alumni who have made significant contributions to their field and community.

Austin De La Cruz, Pharm.D., BCPP, and Pharm.D. candidate coauthors Leslye Echeverria, Sukaina Makzoumi and Alexis Nguyen were honored as the Therapeutic Case Report Award finalists for their presentation, “A Search and Seizure for Relief- The Effective Pharmacological Treatment of Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES) with Escitalopram,” at the 2023 American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists Annual Meeting April 16-19 in Atlanta, Ga. In addition, Pharm.D. student Ashlyn Pulliam received an AAPP Foundation Student Registration Grant to present her project “Picking the Brain: Treatment of Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine Induced Excoration Disorder,” coauthored by fellow student Mackenzie Luke and De La Cruz, at the meeting.

Tahir Hussain, Ph.D., FAHA, FASN, associate dean for research and graduate programs and Joseph P. and Shirley Shipman Buckley Endowed Professor, was honored with the Association of Scientists of Indian Origin in America 2023 Mario Toppo Distinguished Scientist Award at the organization’s 41st Annual Meeting April 22.

Ashna Talwar, Ph.D. candidate and Javeria Khalid, Ph.D. student, received ISPOR Student Travel Grants to present their research at ISPOR 2023 May 7–10 in Boston, Mass. Talwar’s project was on “Cumulative Anticholinergic Burden and Its Predictors Among Older Adults with Alzheimer’s Disease Initiating Cholinesterase Inhibitors,” and Khalid’s presentation was on “Marginal Health Care Expenditure of Patients with Viral Hepatitis in the U.S.: Analysis of Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (2011-2020).”

MariVi Tejada-Simon, Ph.D., M.Ed, UHCOP Hispanic Pharmacy Student Association co-advisor and associate professor, received the Outstanding Advisor Award at the UH Center for Student Involvement’s 38th Annual Campus Leaders Ceremony April 19.

Three UHCOP faculty members were among the honorees at the 2023 UH Faculty Excellence Awards, which were presented May 3 by the UH Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs & Provost. The UHCOP award recipients were: Bradley McConnell, Ph.D., FAHA, professor – Outstanding Graduate Mentor; Meghna Trivedi, Ph.D., Pharm.D., associate professor – Undergraduate Research Mentor; and Joshua Wollen, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor – Teaching Excellence Award-Instructional/Clinical.

Symposium Presents Evidence, Practice Updates in Geriatric Medication Safety

More than 100 practitioners, researchers, students and post-graduate trainees shared insights into safe, effective medication use in older adults at the 2023 Geriatric Medication Safety Symposium April 13-14 in Houston’s Texas Medical Center.

Supported by a five-year National Institute on Aging grant, the symposium was co-hosted by UH College of Pharmacy and McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston. Based on this year’s theme of “Team-Based Care to Bridge the Divide in Cognitive Decline,” the hybrid event featured workshops and plenary sessions from nationallyrecognized speakers presenting diverse perspectives in diagnosis, pharmacotherapy, behavior management, and caregiver roles.

Among the lineup were Ryan M. Carnahan, Pharm.D., M.S., professor and director of graduate studies at The University of Iowa College of Public Health; Carolyn K. Cleverger, R.N., DNP, AGPCNP-BC, GNP-BC, FAANP, professor and associate dean for Transformative Clinical Practice at Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing; Katie Scott, MPH, president of the Houston-based nonprofit organization CarePartners; and Joseph W. Shega, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer of VITAS Healthcare.

The event also drew four podium and 10 poster presentations from students, residents, fellows and post-doctoral trainees from institutions across the Greater Houston area – an increase of more than 80% from the symposium’s inaugural year in 2022.
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