Two UHCOP faculty members and administrators – Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D., FAPhA, and Douglas Thornton, Pharm.D., Ph.D., – were among the honorees at the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Annual Meeting & Expo March 22-25 in Orlando, Fla.

Mustafa & Sanober Lokhandwala Endowed Professor and Chair of the college’s Department of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy, Aparasu was named the 2024 APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Research & Science (APRS) Research Achievement Award recipient. Aparasu is recognized as a leader in health outcomes research and pharmacoepidemiology with a focus on improving the quality of medication use in older adults.

An associate professor and director of the Prescription Drug Misuse Education and Research (PREMIER) Center, Thornton was recognized with the APhA 2024 Generation Rx Award. Thornton has been on the forefront of statewide efforts to gain control of the opioid epidemic that has devastated families and communities across Texas and beyond through The PREMIER Center, which serves as a source for professional education, research expertise, and outreach services.

The meeting also saw UHCOP alumnus and Dean’s Advisory Council member Alex C. Varkey, Pharm.D., M.S., FAPhA, installed as 2024-25 APhA President.

UHCOP's Ming Hu, Ph.D., Diana S-L. Chow Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery and Development, and Gregory Cuny, Ph.D., Joseph P. & Shirley Shipman Buckley Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery, received a $1.4 million Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) grant to fight familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP).

FAP is a rare genetic disorder of the gastrointestinal tract that can cause hundreds or thousands of polyps inside the colon or rectum, and no effective treatments exist for the disorder. Hu and Cuny are set to design new drugs to battle FAP, ones that will inhibit the activity of COX-2 in specific local areas of the body without affecting the entire body.

“We propose to develop locally bioavailable selective COX-2 inhibitors that are only available in the colon to suppress colonic COX-2 expression and reduce prostaglandin E2 levels, which is known to promote tumor growth," Hu said.

Ononogbu's research is focused on health disparities, sickle cell disease, and multiple myeloma. She maintains a clinical/research site at UT Physicians Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center.

The award recognizes pharmacy practitioners who have demonstrated a commitment to improving DEI within HOPA, their institution, practice area or the profession.
Students, Faculty and Staff Earn Honors at TSHP Annual Seminar

UHCOP students, alumni, staff and faculty drew several top honors at the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists Annual Seminar April 5-7 in Round Rock.

For a third consecutive year, a UHCOP team has won the case-based Leadership Challenge. Recent graduate Adam Siddique, Pharm.D. (’24), and third-year Pharm.D. students gia Tran, Julia White and Emmanuel Iru Ru secured the title this year. Siddique has been on the winning team all three years, while Iru Ru is making his triumphant return from 2022.

Fellow UHCOP students Abhishek Singh, Van Vo, Kotoko Ai and Valerie Nguyen were among the finalist teams in the competition.

Lamees Loubani, Pharm.D. (’22), M.S. (’24), who is completing her PGY2 residency at Texas Children’s Hospital after earning the Houston Program M.S. degree at UHCOP, received an Honorable Mention in the Resident/Fellow/PGY2 Category of the TSHP Research & Education Foundation Research Poster Competition.

THP/Houston Methodist Hospital residents Atra Mouser, Pharm.D. (’22), M.S. (’24), who is completing her PGY2 year, and Alexis Hyman, Pharm.D., MBA, PGY1 resident/UHCOP M.S. student, were sworn in as Chair-Elect and Member At-Large, respectively, of the New Practitioners Section. Mouser succeeds 2023-24 Chair and THP alumna Niaz Deyhim, Pharm.D., M.S. (’20), BCPS, HMH pharmacy administrative specialist and system director of the Longitudinal APPE Program.

Siddique received the John Peyton Hudlow and Mark Tamble Memorial Scholarship, while alumnus and current THP Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center PGY1 resident/UHCOP M.S. student Michael Torano, Pharm.D. (’23), MBA, received the Richard Cadle Mentoring Scholarship for Pharmacy Leadership Award.

Outgoing TSHP President and THP alumnus Rodney Cox, Pharm.D., M.S. (’11), bestowed Cuellar Star Awards to several individuals, including Divya Varkey, Pharm.D., M.S., UHCOP clinical associate professor and director of the THP M.S. program, who ended her term as 2023-24 chair of the Communications Council.

UHCOP Instructional Lab Manager Sherrie Myers, RCPht, was honored with the Mike Knapp Pharmacy Technician Award.

UHCOP alumna Diane B. Ginsburg, Ph.D., M.S., R.Ph., FASHP, associate dean for healthcare partnerships, clinical professor of pharmacy practice, G.D. Searle & Co. Endowed Fellow in Pharmacy and Provost’s Distinguished Service Faculty at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, presented “Embracing the Nonlinear Path: Words of Wisdom from the 2024 Harvey A.K. Whitney Awardee” March 7 in a special session of the college’s John & Aimee Mohr Clinical PPTR Seminar Series.

UHCOP and the Phi Lambda Sigma Pharmacy Leadership Society Upsilon Chapter hosted Denise M. Jonathan, Pharm.D. (’05), vice president, health plan services at KelseyCare Advantage, as the 2024 James McCarty Leadership Lecturer April 22.

At the UHCOP 2024 Graduation Awards Reception May 8, the college recognized individual pharmacy practitioners and sites for their outstanding experiential preceptorship during the 2023-24 academic year. The honorees were:

- Ambulatory Care Preceptor – Thanh Nguyen, Pharm.D. (’11)
- Community Preceptor – Brandon Casarez, Pharm.D. (’17)
- Faculty Preceptor – Amelia Sofjan, Pharm.D.
- Health Systems Pharmacy – University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
- Hospital Pharmacy Preceptor – Mohammed Fahimuddin, Pharm.D.
- Institutional Patient Care Preceptor – Kayta Kobayashi, Pharm.D.
- Outpatient Pharmacy – Revive RX Pharmacy
Faculty & Research News

Symposia Focus on Clinical and Translational Research, Geriatric Safety

Nearly 200 practitioners, researchers, students and postdoctoral trainees combined exchanged insight and research at two symposia in April.

Funded by a five-year National Institute on Aging grant, the Geriatric Medication Safety Symposium (GMSS) is a collaboration of UHCOP and UTHealth McGovern Medical School. The April 25-26 event featured four plenary sessions and two workshops from the perspectives of nursing, pharmacy, medicine and dentistry.

Early-stage faculty members, graduate and professional program students, and postdoctoral residents and fellows presented 21 posters and four podium talks on their research.

Leading the plenary talks and workshops were Michelle A. Chui, Pharm.D., Ph.D., FAPhA, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy, Yong-Fang Kuo, Ph.D., University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Timothy P. McNeill, R.N., MPH, founder of Freedmen's Health, Amanda S. Mixon, M.D., M.S., MSPH, Vanderbilt University, and June Sadowsky, DDS, MPH, UTHealth School of Dentistry.

Bilqees Fatima, Pharm.D., M.S., UHCOP Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences-Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy Concentration candidate, won Best Poster Award for her project, "Group-Based Trajectory Modeling for Assessing Oral Endocrine Therapy Adherence Pattern in HER-positive Breast Cancer Patients at DHR Health in the Rio Grande Valley."

Sadaf Milani, Ph.D., MPH, UTMB Department of Internal Medicine assistant professor of geriatrics, won Best Podium Presentation for her project, "The Association of Dementia Medications with Pain Medication in Dementia Patients with Chronic Pain."

The college's inaugural Clinical and Translational Research Symposium April 26 included 16 podium presentations and 40 e-poster presentations, as well as a keynote presentation by Deanna L. Kroetz, Ph.D., dean and professor of The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. Kroetz presented "Reverse Translational Studies to Understand the Molecular Mechanisms of Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy."

The top e-poster presentations recognized at the event were:

First place – Elizabeth Eversole, medical student at UH's Tillman J. Fertitta College of Medicine, for "Assessing the Cardioprotective Effects of Exogenous Hormone Administration in a Post-Myocardial Infarction Female Rat Model."

Second place – Wangjia Cao, Pharmaceutical Sciences-Pharmacology Concentration Ph.D. student at UHCOP, for "Investigating nebivolol, an anti-hypertensive drug, for treating triple negative breast cancer."

Third place – Jun Hyound Park, instructor at Baylor College of Medicine, for "Anti-hypertensive drug nebivolol regulates mitochondrial fatty acid β-oxidation driven c-Src pathway in triple-negative breast cancer."

Student News

The UHCOP Chapter of the Hispanic Pharmacy Student Association (HPSA) won the 2024 Outstanding Student Organization Award at the 39th Annual Campus Leaders Ceremony hosted by the Center for Student Involvement (CSI) April 8.

Among the events and activities noted by leadership in the nomination letter, the chapter engaged with the campus and greater Houston community through events such as the City of Houston Mayor’s Back 2 School Fest, Pharmilia Hour, a vaccine workshop and the Consulate of Mexico ‘Day of Health’ Health Fair.

The UHCOP Chapter of the Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists (SSHP) has been recognized as a 2023-24 American Society of Health-System Pharmacy Outstanding Professional Development Award recipient for its Residency Bootcamp. The chapter was one of 20 nationwide to receive the honor.

Completing its eighth year, the Residency Bootcamp is presented by students/residents of The Houston Program and is an intensive seven-part program in which third-year Pharm.D. students have their resumes reviewed, engage in mock interviews, and participate in an open-forum Q&A session.

UHCOP research staff member Muchen Liu discusses his muscular dystrophy research during the e-poster presentation sessions at the CTR Symposium.
Two Ph.D. students - Olajumoke Olateju and Zhen Zeng - were among the UHCP attendees making 19 presentations at ISPOR 2024 May 5-8 in Atlanta, Ga. Olateju received an ISPOR 2024 Student Travel Award to present "Buprenorphine Adherence Trajectories, Persistence, and Healthcare Expenditures Among Commercially Insured Patients with Opioid Use Disorder." Zeng was named a Top 5% Finalist for her presentation "Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Nivolumab Versus Dosectaxel for the Treatment of Advanced Non-squamous NSCLC Including Pd-L1 Testing in the United States."

Bradley McConnell, Ph.D., Pharmacology professor and assistant chair of Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences, has received a five-year $792,000 grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to create a summer research program, UH Cardiovascular Undergraduate Research Experience, to engage the upcoming generation of minority, underrepresented cardiovascular researchers in hands-on heart, blood and lung research.

Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D., FAPhA, Mustafa and Sanober Lokhandwala Professor of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy, has been appointed to the Pharmacy Quality Alliance Education Advisory Council.

Matthew A. Wanat, PharmD, BCPS, BCCCP, FCCM, clinical professor, was recognized with a 2024 Presidential Citation Award from the Society of Critical Care Medicine.


Tyler Varisco, Ph.D., Pharm.D., assistant professor, presented "It’s Not in Stock! A Grounded Theory Approach to the Interplay Between Deception and Conflict Avoidance in Community Pharmacy Practice" at the RXSummit April 1-4 in Atlanta, Ga.


Current/Recent Student, Fellow/Resident, Postdoc/Staff

Faculty Author

Recent Publications