Physician-Scientist Peter Hotez Presents Inaugural Lokhandwala Lecture

In his presentation at the University of Houston College of Pharmacy’s inaugural Lokhandwala Lecture & Research Convocation, renowned physician, scientist, author and vaccine advocate Peter J. Hotez, M.D., Ph.D., encouraged current and future health professionals to be more vocal in engaging with patients about the safety and science behind vaccines.

Hotez is dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine and Professor of Pediatrics and Molecular Virology & Microbiology at Baylor College of Medicine where he is also the co-director of the Texas Children’s Center for Vaccine Development (CVD) and Texas Children’s Hospital Endowed Chair of Tropical Pediatrics.

As co-director of the Texas Children’s CVD, he leads a team and product development partnership working on new vaccines for hookworm infection, schistosomiasis, leishmaniasis, Chagas disease, and SARS/MERS/SARS-2 coronavirus diseases.

During his presentation titled “COVID-19 and Vaccines: Science vs. Anti-science,” Hotez discussed his academic and research journey and his willingness to speak out on public health matters in the news and social media, despite facing insults and threats from the misinformed to fanatical conspiracy theorists.

The event also featured three-minute TED Talks by UHCOP graduate students Kalyani A. Kulkarni, Tarilate Temedie Asogwu, Prachet Bhatt, Sayantap Datta and Jieni Li on their current research.

The convocation and lecture series honors UHCOP Professor Emeritus and former dean Mustafa F. Lokhandwala, Ph.D., FAHA, FASN, for his commitment to advancing the college’s academic and research programs.

ACCP Bestows Miller Award to Garey

Kevin W. Garey, Pharm.D., M.S., FASHP, FIDSA, FCCP, Robert L. Bobbitt Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery, received the 2022 Russell R. Miller Award from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy at the 2022 ACCP Global Conference on Clinical Pharmacy Oct. 15-18 in San Francisco.

The award recognizes an ACCP member who has made outstanding contributions to the professional literature of clinical pharmacy.

With a body of work that exceeds 250 peer-reviewed journal articles, several book chapters and 200-plus presentations, Garey has twice won both the Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists’ Impact Paper in Infectious Diseases Pharmacotherapy Award and the Top 10 Paper in Mycology Award from the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, as well as earning the ASHP Drug Therapy Research Award and the Best Review Paper from the Journal of Hospital Infection.

Recognized as an ACCP Fellow at the organization’s 2021 meeting, he has been a member of ACCP since 1996 and served as a journal reviewer for its publication Pharmacotherapy since 2006.

Dagher Wins Abstract Award at AAPS PharmSci 360

Fatima Dagher, a Ph.D. student in the Pharmaceutical Sciences-Pharmaceutics Concentration program, was recognized with a 2022 Best Abstract Award at the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists’ PharmSci 360 meeting Oct. 16-19 in Boston.

Dagher’s abstract, “Pharmacodynamic Assessments of Paclitaxel in Combination with Calcipotriol in Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma (PDAC),” was one of 10 abstracts selected for the award among more than 900 project submitted to the meeting.
Student News

SNPhA Chapter Earns Multiple Honors at National Meeting

The UHCOP Chapter of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association locked up several national scholarships and awards at the 2022 SNPhA National Conference in Atlanta, Ga.

The chapter brought home five out of eight possible awards for their work implementing local projects based on the SNPhA national initiatives Bridging the Gap, Fighting Diabetes, Mental Health, Power to End Stroke and Project Keepsake.

Pharm.D. candidates Lauren Lee and Noemie Senawong and student Josiah Willingham — working as the “Lung Defenders” — won first place and a $10,000 scholarship in the Walmart Prescription for Service competition. The UHCOP team was one of three finalists invited to present their projects nationally after earning $2,500 projects grants at the regional level.

Pharm.D. students Andrew Jiang and Trina Mercado finished second in the Kroger Clinical Skills Competition, while Pharm.D. candidate Rheedda Onihana took second place in the AstraZeneca Medical Science Liaison Competition.

In addition, Onihana and fellow student Yashvi Patel teamed with Texas Southern University Pharm.D. students Chindindu (Chiddy) Aderibigbe and Janai Minga to take third place in the LEAP at Lilly® Business Competition.

Senawong and fellow Pharm.D. candidate Andrew Doan earned the National Pharmaceutical Association Foundation’s Dr. Barry Bleidt Endowed Scholarship and the Walmart Health and Wellness Endowed Scholarship, respectively.

In addition to the chapter being recognized for hosting a SNPhA regional conference in the spring, UHCOP Associate Professor and Chapter Advisor Louis Williams, Ph.D., was presented with the Advisor of the Year Regions III, IV & V Conference Award.

Overall, the chapter was honored as the runner-up finalist in the Large Chapter category for the SNPhA/Rite Aid Chauncey I. Cooper Chapter Excellence Award (aka “chapter of the year”).

Undergraduate and graduate students as well as postdoctoral associates from across UH shared their latest research findings at the 2022 PPS Research Symposium hosted Aug. 10-11 by UHCOP’s Department of Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

Awards were bestowed on the highest scoring presentations:

Graduate Student Poster — First Place to Kavya Mathukumalli for “Targeting TAK1 signaling in Rhabdomyosarcoma,” and Second Place to Jacob McPherson for “Functional and Metagenomic Evaluation of Ibezapolstat for Early Evaluation of Anti-Recurrence Effects in Clostridioides difficile Infection.”

Graduate Student Oral — First Place to Mehrdad Rajaei for “β2AR-Gas and β2AR-βarr2 Fusion Proteins for Studying β2AR Biased Signaling in Heart Failure,” and Second Place to Brianna Eales for “Impact of an iron chelator on in vitro and in vivo growth of A. baumannii.”

Pharm.D. students Hayden Huynh, Jennifer Ng and An Tran recently were awarded scholarships from the Vietnamese American Pharmacists Association (VAPhA).
Faculty & Research News

UHCOP has welcomed Jinhee Jo, Pharm.D., BCIDP, research assistant professor, and Riyasat Ali, Ph.D., research assistant professor.

After receiving her Pharm.D. at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Pharmacy, Jo completed a PGY-1 residency at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center. Jo recently completed the three-year Infectious Diseases Pharmacy Fellowship program between UHCOP and fellow Texas Medical Center institution CHI St. Luke’s Health-Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center. Jo has received consecutive IDWeek Trainee travel awards to present her research at the 2022 and 2021 IDWeek meetings. Jo’s research focuses on host microbiome colonization resistance against bacterial pathogens, including C. difficile and other multidrug resistant organisms, and antimicrobial resistance.

Ali joined UHCOP in 2018 as a research associate under Tahir Hussain, Ph.D., FAHA, Joseph P. and Shirley Shipman Buckley Endowed Professor and associate dean for Research and Graduate Programs. As a member of Hussain’s lab, Ali has been investigating the renoprotective roles of the AT2 receptor and its correlation with immune cell infiltration in kidney diseases. Most recently, Ali has shown that AT2R activation reduces the kidney infiltrating immune cells, thereby limiting post-IR kidney injury, and enhancing the tissue repair. Until 2018, Ali served as a postdoctoral fellow and research associate at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. Ali completed his Ph.D. degree in biochemistry/immunology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi.

Five faculty members have been promoted: Susan Abughosh, Ph.D., professor, Greg Cuny, Ph.D., professor, Aditi Marwaha, Ph.D., instructional associate professor, Douglas Thornton, Pharm.D., Ph.D., associate professor with tenure, and Tyler Varisco, Pharm.D., Ph.D., assistant professor.

Krishna Boini, Ph.D., assistant professor, has received a $511,151 subcontract from Arkansas Colleges of Health Education for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute-funded project, “Role of Trimethylamine-N-oxide in endothelial dysfunction.”

Diana S-L. Chow, Ph.D., FNAI, John J. & Paula Lovoi Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery and Development, was honored with the Ohio State University’s 2022 Jack L. Beal Postbaccalaureate Distinguished Alumni Award in October and the American College of Clinical Pharmacology’s “Excellence in Achievement” Program in August. Chow received a $627,496 subcontract from UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for the National Cancer Institute-funded project, “Pre-IND Development of Polymeric Micelles with Dual Drug Payloads for HCC Therapy.”

Rajender Aparasu, Richard Bond, Gregory Cuny, Kevin Garey, Ming Hu, Mustafa Lokhandwala, Ruiwen Zhang

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Austin De La Cruz, Pharm.D., BCPP, clinical assistant professor, was recently recognized by the American College of Clinical Pharmacy for his outstanding contributions as a reviewer for the Pharmacotherapy Self-Assessment Program.

Xinli Liu, Ph.D., associate professor, has received a $208,875 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for her project, “Oral Toxicity Assessment of PAH Mixtures using an in Vitro 3D Cell Culture Bioreactor Mimicking the IN VIVO Intestinal Tract Environment.”

Alexander Statsyuk, Ph.D., assistant professor, has received a $372,100 subcontract from the University of Arizona for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute funded-project, “Anaplerotic Reprogramming of Endothelial Cells in Pulmonary Hypertension.”

Mingfu Wu, Ph.D., associate professor, has received a $124,000 subcontract from the University of Washington for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute-funded project, “Regulation and function of mitochondrial calcium uniporter in the heart.”


