

PharmTox Fights COVID-19

Week of June 15-19, 2020 Accolades

Accepted Publication by Drs. Ho and Leung



A paper by Professor Shuk Mei Ho and Associate Professor, Ricky Leung, entitled "A novel Cas9-targeted long-read assay for simultaneous detection of IDH1/2 mutations and clinically relevant MGMT methylation in fresh biopsies of diffuse glioma," was accepted for publication in *Acta Neuropathologica Communications*. Other authors on this paper are Drs. Thidathip Wongsurawat, Piroon Jenjaroenpun, Annick De Loose,

Duah Alkam, David W. Ussery, Intawat Nookaew, John D. Day and Analiz Rodriguez.

The article discusses how the proper prognosis of glioma requires accurate determination of mutation and DNA methylation level in certain marker genes. It generally takes weeks to finish both analyses. In this study, the authors developed a quick and novel molecular assay (nCATS) utilizing a long-read sequencing technique to simultaneously assess gene mutation status and DNA methylation level in human brain tumor biopsies.

Department Spotlight: Michael Owens

Since retiring from UAMS in August 2019, Emeritus Professor Michael Owens has stayed in touch with the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology and provided help when asked. "What I miss the most is the people, because you make a lot of friends and colleagues during 34 years of service to UAMS," says Dr. Owens. During his retirement he still works part-time for his company Intervexion Therapeutics helping with their grants. His travel plans changed during the recent phase of his retirement because of the Covid-19 pandemic. While a planned trip to Italy had to be canceled, he did get to visit several cities on his bucket list before travel was restricted. Recently he helped Drs. Peterson and Berquist prepare a NIDA R21 grant by reviewing the application. In late January 2020 he was invited by the UA Board of Trustees to make a presentation about his research program. "Since I retired, UAMS has undergone several major changes and met multiple challenges because of Covid-19. Hopefully working through these difficult times together will lead to long-term positive outcomes. Best wishes to all of you."



Entrance Screeners Needed

Professor Alexei Basnakian, Assistant Professor Nirmala Parajuli, research technician Suki Fukuda, and education specialist Sylvia Stewart volunteered their time this past week to help at the screening station at the Cancer Institute. UAMS is asking non-clinical employees who are available to please help by working three- to four-hour shifts at the entrance screening sites at building entrances across campus. [Click here](#) to see available shifts. Research area personnel are asked to fill in any gaps at the nearby Cancer Institute.



Stocked and Reddie

Stocked and Reddie, the UAMS food pantry, is looking for volunteers and donations of food and money. You can go to their [website](#) to give online.