

PharmTox Fights COVID-19 Weeks of July 27- August 7, 2020

SPaT: New Trainees and Annual Symposium



Three graduate students have been selected for appointment to the Systems Pharmacology and Toxicology (SPaT) T32 Training Program. The trainees, who officially became SPaT scholars on August 1, include Lance Benson (mentor, Dr. Shengyu Mu), Kalee Holloway (mentor, Dr. Paul Drew), and Ravi Sun (mentor, Dr. Graham Strub). Lance and Kalee

(pictured left and middle) are recipients of two-year NIGMS funded appointments. Ravi Sun (pictured right) received a one-year campus-funded match appointment as an MD/PhD student.

The annual symposium for the SPaT Training Program will be held on August 7th at 9am as a virtual event due to Covid-19 precautions. The morning session will feature presentations by SPaT trainees appointed in 2018 and 2019. The afternoon session will feature keynote speaker, S. Cyrus Khojasteh, PhD. Dr. Khojasteh is Principal Scientist and Associate Director at Genentech, Inc., South San Francisco, CA. He will present "How data rich science drives drug discovery".



Drs. Berquist and Brents Submit Grant Application

Assistant professors, Michael Berquist and Lisa Brents submitted an application for an intramural ACRI/ABI Investigator-Initiated Research Grant Award, which was titled "Adolescent alcohol use following prenatal opioid exposure and early life abuse". They have proposed a first-in-kind study to establish a causal link between alcohol abuse susceptibility, prenatal opioid exposure, early life stress, and noradrenergic dysregulation in adolescent rats. They hypothesize that dysregulation of the noradrenergic system results in a greater susceptibility to develop an alcohol use disorder in adolescents who have experienced prenatal opioid exposure and adverse childhood experiences. The ACRI/ABI award includes two years of funding for a total direct cost of \$75,000. Drs. Berquist and Brents plan to submit a scaled-up version of this application to NIH as an R21 grant in October.



Department Spotlight: Yunzhao Xiong

Yunzhao Xiong has worked in the laboratory of Dr. Shengyu Mu as a visiting graduate student from China. Sadly, her last day at UAMS will be August 10th, when Yunzhao will return to China to continue her studies and complete her doctorate degree. During her time in the department, she has contributed to Dr. Mu's research project focused on discovering the role of renal immune cells in the pathogenesis of salt-sensitive hypertension, performing both in-vitro and in-vivo studies. "I've had a great time in the department", said Yunzhao. "Dr. Mu and everyone here has provided me with an excellent situation for studying and living, for which I feel grateful. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me."



Health Screener Recognition

Professor Alexei Basnakian continues to volunteer as a screener at the Cancer Institute. There still are volunteer shifts left in August. [Click here](#) to see available shifts.

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.