

THE

BUZZ

UAMS

College of Medicine

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“NIH Funding”

A huge congratulations to Dr. William E. Fantegrossi on securing a major new federal research grant! Officially awarded on July 6, this R01 grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse will fund an crucial new project looking into the abuse-related and neurocognitive consequences of halogenated arylcyclohexylamines. These complex synthetic compounds are increasingly appearing in public spaces, and understanding their long-term impact on the brain and behavior is critical for public health. This major award brings significant support to UAMS, allowing Dr. Fantegrossi’s lab to dive deep into how these specific substances affect cognitive function and dependency.

We are incredibly excited to see the insights and discoveries that will come from Dr. Fantegrossi's lab as this vital research gets underway. Please join us in celebrating this fantastic achievement for UAMS research!



“F31 Grant News”



Huge congratulations to Chris Mora! A senior Ph.D. student in Dr. Mu’s lab, Chris just received the official Notice of Award for his NIH F31 Predoctoral Fellowship from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Getting here wasn't a straight line. Chris first submitted his application, “Targeting Immune Cells to Save the Failing Heart,” back in late 2024. Due to unexpected administrative changes at the NIH, his original review session was canceled in early 2025, forcing him to revise and resubmit. He stuck with it, scored incredibly well on the second round, and officially got the green light on July 9.

Chris’s dissertation research looks at how immune cells drive the early stages and progression of hypertensive heart disease. Specifically, his work examines how infiltrating T cells regulate oxidative stress in heart muscle cells, and how macrophages contribute to the scarring and fibrotic remodeling of heart tissue. Ultimately, he hopes to uncover new ways to shield the heart from the long-term damage caused by high blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions.

Reflecting on the hurdles, Chris hopes his experience reminds other trainees to keep pushing forward, even when facing administrative roadblocks beyond their control. He is incredibly grateful to his family, including Laura Mora, his colleagues in the Mu and Liu labs, his mentors, and the entire Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology for backing him every step of the way. Congratulations on this hard-earned milestone!

“Cover Story Success”

The department is thrilled to celebrate Dr. Amod Sharma, a postdoctoral fellow in the Parajuli Laboratory, for the outstanding recognition of his recent research. Dr. Sharma’s co-authored article, “*Impaired Renal Mitochondria and Bioenergetics During Obesity-Associated NAFLD*,” was not only published in the prestigious international peer-reviewed journal *Nutrients* (Volume 18, Issue 13; June 2026), but was also selected by the journal's editors as the featured cover story for the issue.

Out of 177 articles published in this volume, the editors singled out Dr. Sharma’s study to highlight its exceptional significance. The groundbreaking research demonstrates that renal mitochondrial dysfunction and altered bioenergetics serve as key mechanisms linking obesity-associated non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) with kidney injury. These findings offer crucial new insights into the complex organ complications associated with obesity.

This recognition follows previous acclaim for the project, a portion of which was selected for an prestigious oral presentation at ObesityWeek 2025 in Atlanta, underscoring the deep impact of this work within the global metabolic disease research community.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Sharma and the Parajuli Lab on this highly deserved honor and remarkable achievement!

“Educator Training Series”

Congratulations to our latest Postdoctoral Educator Training graduates! We are incredibly proud to recognize the postdoctoral scholars who just wrapped up the UAMS Postdoctoral Educator Training: Foundations of Teaching & Facilitation workshop series. Over six interactive sessions, this group dived into practical, evidence-informed strategies centered around adult learning, learner engagement, instructional design, and delivering meaningful feedback.

Their dedication to sharpening these skills shows a real commitment to excellence in both education and mentorship. We cannot wait to see the positive impact they will continue to make as educators, mentors, and researchers across the UAMS campus and out in the wider scientific community. Please join us in celebrating our outstanding graduates: Carol Morris, Rami Ahmad Shahrour, Amod Sharma, Christian Mitchell, Alberto Losada, and Sergio Cortez. Cheers to your hard work and achievement!

