

“Mu Lab Makes Waves at the APS Summit”

At the American Physiology Summit, held April 23–26 in Minnesota, Dr. Shengyu Mu was appointed to a four-year leadership role on the American Physiological Society's Renal Section Award Committee. He will serve as Co-Chair for two years, followed by Chair for an additional two years to support the section's efforts in recognizing scientific excellence and professional achievement.

The Mu Lab graduate students attended the Summit to present their work and hear about the latest advances in physiology research. Senior graduate students Katie Deck and Chris Mora presented research on immune mechanisms in hypertension and cardio-renal disease.

Katie presented her work titled “*Kidney Resident Memory CD8+ T Cells Drive the Immortality of Hypertension*”. Her abstract was selected as an Abstract of Distinction. Chris presented a poster titled “*Cytokine-Mediated Macrophage Transition Promotes Early Cardiac Fibrosis in Chronic Hypertension*”, highlighting how dysregulated cytokine signaling reshapes macrophage function and contributes to cardiac fibrosis in chronic hypertension. While attending the Summit, Chris also received the exciting news that his NIH F31 fellowship application was selected for funding, pending issuance of the official Notice of Award.

First-year students Grace Bing and Faith Stephens also attended the Summit to participate in the scientific sessions and gain valuable exposure to cutting-edge research. Together, Dr. Mu’s APS leadership recognition, the Mu Lab trainees’ research presentations, Katie’s Abstract of Distinction, and Chris’s NIH F31 funding success reflect the lab’s growing contributions to understanding the renal, cardiovascular, and immune mechanisms of disease and identifying therapeutic targets to mitigate them. The Department congratulates Dr. Mu, Katie, Chris, Grace, Faith, and the Mu Lab on these outstanding achievements.



“Amazing Research Published by Fouda Lab”

We are pleased to highlight Dr. Rami Shahrer, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow in the Fouda Lab, who recently served as the first author on a publication in *Cell Death & Disease* (Nature portfolio) titled “*CD5L promotes efferocytosis and resolution of retinal ischemic injury*”. This achievement reflects the outstanding mentorship and leadership of Dr. Abdelrahman Y. Fouda as the senior and corresponding author. The study reveals that the protein CD5L plays a central role in enhancing macrophage clearance of apoptotic cells through the CD5L/CD36 axis, thereby improving recovery following retinal ischemic injury.

The research demonstrates that the loss of CD5L worsens retinal injury outcomes, while recombinant CD5L provides protective effects. Dr. Shahrer’s work highlights significant translational potential and is supported by a provisional patent application exploring CD5L-based therapeutic strategies for retinal ischemic diseases. The department extends its congratulations to the team and looks forward to future advancements. Co-authors on the publication include Bushra Zaman, Piyanan Chuesiang, Melissa Wild, Dr. Esraa Shosha, Dr. Yuet-Kin Leung, Dr. Shengyu Mu, and Dr. Nancy J. Rusch.



“Advancing Stroke Research”

Carol Morris, a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Fouda’s laboratory, attended and presented a poster titled “*Disrupting the CD47/SIRPα Axis for Protection Against Ischemic Stroke*” at the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) Conference in Milwaukee last week. Her participation is part of her Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship Postdoctoral Training Program. The conference is focused on advancing clinical and translational science by fostering collaboration, innovation, and the rapid application of research discoveries to improve patient care and public health. During downtime, the scholars had the opportunity to explore the local area and visit the Milwaukee Art Museum.



“ASMSA Student Awarded Summer Fellowship”

Rebekah (Bekah) Johnson, a high school student at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts, has been awarded the Murphy USA Summer Research Fellowship to support her research in the Mu Lab this summer. Bekah has been participating in research in the Mu Lab since November 2025, dedicating two afternoons each week to hands-on laboratory training and independent research activities. Building on the preliminary studies she has generated during her time in the lab, Bekah applied for the summer fellowship to continue advancing her project. The fellowship provides \$1,500 in support for her proposed summer research project. Her application was selected from a strong pool of submissions, recognizing both the quality of her proposal and the promise of her ongoing work. The Department congratulates Bekah on this outstanding achievement and looks forward to seeing her continued growth as a young scientist through her summer research experience in the Mu Lab.



“Welcoming the Newest Member of the Prather Family!”

Congratulations to Dr. Pather and his wife, Ann, on the arrival of their first grandchild, Wesley (Wes) Graham Prather! Born on Tuesday evening, April 28, at approximately 6:30 PM, baby Wes arrived weighing 7 pounds, 10 ounces, and measuring 19 inches long. We are pleased to share that proud parents Collin and Abby, along with baby Wes, are doing well and are returning to their home here in Little Rock. The department extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Prather family on this exciting new addition!

