

## TEXAS PHARMACY CONGRESS REPORT

### TEXAS TECH HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

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## TEAM EFFORT BRINGS NATIONAL RECOGNITION TO SCHOOL OF PHARMACY RESEARCHER

**N**inh (Irene) M. La-Beck, Pharm.D., a faculty member on the Abilene campus! On October 23, Dr. La-Beck officially received the 2016 New Investigator Award from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) at the group's 2016 Annual Meeting in Hollywood, Florida. She also delivered the annual New Investigator Award lecture.

"Research is a team endeavor and I could not have done any of this without the dedication of my current and former research technicians and students," La-Beck says without hesitation. "My husband also deserves at least half the credit for my work; I would not have chosen and persisted on this path were it not for his unwavering support, encouragement and patience."

Among other criteria, ACCP's New Investigator Award recognizes a significant research contribution in clinical pharmaceutical science and whose research program includes a substantial publication record, a programmatic theme or an especially noteworthy single publication. La-Beck certainly meets that standard, as many of her peer-reviewed research papers, review articles, book chapters and abstracts have been published in leading research

journals, including *Cancer Medicine*; *Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics*; *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*; and *Nanomedicine: Nanotechnology, Biology, and Medicine*.

La-Beck, an assistant professor for the Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy campus in Abilene, says her current research focuses on understanding how interactions between anticancer drugs and the immune system alters the immune response against tumors. With funding from a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, and by utilizing a combination of studies in cells, animals and patients, her research team has uncovered new ways a class of nanoparticle anticancer drugs currently used in the clinic can affect and regulate the cell immunity.

"We are now developing ways to leverage these immunological effects to fight cancer more effectively," La-Beck adds. "Ultimately we expect that this work will lead to new drugs and new treatment combinations that will prolong the lives of patients with cancer."



## WHITE COAT CEREMONIES WELCOME CLASS OF 2020



**T**he TTUHSC School of Pharmacy welcomed the Class of 2020 at the annual White Coat Ceremony in Abilene (Aug. 7) and Amarillo (Aug. 14). The incoming students received their traditional white pharmacy coats, recited the Oath of a Pharmacist for the first time and signed the Pharmacist Code of Conduct.

The event is part of the annual orientation period that prepares incoming School of Pharmacy students for their first year of classes and provides them with an overview of the school's four-year doctor of pharmacy program.

As a universally recognized symbol of health care, the pharmacy white coat encompasses all aspects of pharmacy and the delivery of pharmaceutical care. For incoming students, receiving the white coat is a reminder of the commitment they are making to an honorable and trusted profession.

The White Coat Ceremony is also the first time each incoming student recites the Oath of a Pharmacist, which is based upon the Oath of Maimonides and was adopted by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy in 1983.

The Pharmacist Code of Conduct defines the roles and responsibilities of pharmacists and forms the basis for student conduct when they interact with patients and colleagues during their years in the TTUHSC pharmacy program and after they graduate and enter the profession.

## FACULTY RECEIVE 2016 PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

**S** Six School of Pharmacy faculty members were among a group of 32 university professors and researchers to receive TTUHSC President's Awards Nov. 3. TTUHSC President Tedd L. Mitchell, M.D., presented the awards in conjunction with his 2016 State of the University Address. The awards recognize exceptional efforts made by the recipients in the clinic and the classroom.

Honorees from the School of Pharmacy included: Richard Leff, Pharm.D. (University Distinguished Professor Award) and Paul Trippier, Ph.D. (President's Early Career Investigator Award). In addition, Nikita Mirajkar, Ph.D., Pratip Mitra, Ph.D., Russell Snyder, Ph.D., and Margaret Weis, Ph.D., comprised the School of Pharmacy team that received the President's Team Teaching Award.

## ABILENE'S KLEIN SET TO LEAD TPA

**W** When School of Pharmacy alumna Mary Klein, Pharm.D., (Class of '07) officially becomes president for the Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA), it will be the high point of a journey that began in 2003 when she arrived at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) campus in Amarillo.



Klein, an assistant professor for the Department of Pharmacy Practice at the TTUHSC campus in Abilene, is currently serving as TPA's president-elect until she begins her one-year term in March. She has served the organization in many other capacities along

the way, including as student academy chair, speaker of the TPA House of Delegates, director-at-large for the TPA Board of Directors and TPA vice president. She received the group's Distinguished Young Pharmacist award in 2012.

"I joined the Texas Tech American Pharmacists Association-Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP) chapter as a student and became a TPA student academy director that year," Klein recalls. "I've literally worked my way up through TPA since then."

At the Abilene campus Klein is the faculty advisor for the School of Pharmacy's student APhA/TPA chapter and Phi Lambda Sigma Leadership Society chapter. She says serving professional organizations is one way she can give back to the profession.

"I have always believed that being involved is a key component of being a part of the profession of pharmacy," Klein says. "This kind of involvement gives us an opportunity to shape the direction that the profession is headed."

## DAS JOINS DEPARTMENT OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES IN AMARILLO

**H** Hiranmoy Das, Ph.D., has joined the School of Pharmacy as a professor for the Department of Biomedical Sciences on the TTUHSC campus in Amarillo.



Prior to his arrival at TTUHSC School of Pharmacy, Das served as an associate professor for the Department of Internal Medicine at The Ohio State University

professor for the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. He received his postdoctoral training from the Department of Internal Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a teaching affiliate for Harvard Medical School, in Boston.

Das's research is focused on isolating and expanding a variety of human adult stem cells and using them for the treatment of various

degenerative disease (hind limb ischemia, myocardial ischemia, osteoporosis and wound healing including diabetic condition) models in immunocompromised models.

In addition, Das utilizes human immune cells — specifically, gamma delta T cells in immunotherapy — for various cancers (breast, ovary, etc.) using immunocompromised models. He also investigates the role of transcriptional factor KLF2 in regulation of immune cells, specifically monocytes, in rheumatoid arthritis and inflammation.

Das, currently a NIH (R01) funded investigator, has authored more than 45 articles for peer-reviewed research journals. He has also penned 10 book chapters and received two patents. He serves as a member of the editorial board for several peer-reviewed journals and serves on the grant review panels of various state, national and international funding agencies.

# GRAD STUDENT RECEIVES AAPS AWARD



The American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS) recently selected Kshitij Verma, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Pharmacy's Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences, to receive a Graduate Student Research Award in the Drug Discovery and Development Interface. Verma also received the AAPS Biotechnology Graduate Student Research Award sponsored by Eli Lilly & Company in March.

The AAPS selection committee deems students selected for the Graduate Student Research Award as providing the most outstanding contributions through their graduate research.

Verma will receive a stipend for travel expenses to present his research and be recognized Nov. 13- 17 at the 2016 AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition in Denver. He works in the lab of Paul Trippier, Ph.D., an assistant professor for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

# TTUHSC SCHOOL OF PHARMACY RANKS HIGH FOR PHARMACY PROGRAMS



Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy ranked 16th nationally in the 2016 Top Graduate Schools by SR Education Group and released on GraduatePrograms.com.

The ranking was calculated utilizing feedback from more than 51,000 actual graduates representing more than 1,700 schools. The data used in the school rankings were gathered in 2015-2016 from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and were combined with the internal recommended rate data, which is calculated based on tens of thousands of student reviews submitted to GraduatePrograms.com. NCES is the primary governmental entity for gathering and presenting data related to education. Its data is updated annually.

Overall, TTUHSC ranked first nationally in the same survey results released early this summer.

"These rankings are by the students and for the students," TTUHSC President Tedd L. Mitchell, M.D., said. "One hundred percent of the information is from the students without university input. Other rankings may adjust the outcome because of university input. These rankings demonstrate the quality of education our students are receiving here. We are extremely proud of this."

# TEAMWORK PREPARES PHARMACY STUDENTS FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR



School of Pharmacy students in Amarillo and Abilene participated in hands-on exercises to encourage teamwork in the upcoming school year Aug. 9 at their respective campuses.

The exercises focused on team building and communication. Students were divided into groups and were challenged to build the highest structures using Legos and a deck of cards. For the final exercise, the student teams assembled bicycles for charity. By the end of the day, the Amarillo students put together eight bicycles.

"We were broken up into groups to use our communication skills and teambuilding skills to learn how to collaborate and work together," firstyear (P1) pharmacy student Kingsley Ugoji explained.

Assistant professor Kenna Payne said the students learn valuable lessons from such simple tasks.

"They had to problem-solve and decide what's already been performed and what hasn't been during these tasks," Payne said. "While doing these projects we can do service; service to the community is very important and we want to give back."

The students will hand-deliver the bicycles to two local charities of their choice before the end of the semester.

Three days later, on Aug. 12, more than 100 Amarillo P1 and P2 pharmacy students received some back-to-school clinical training in preparation for the new semester. The hands-on training was related to providing patient testing procedures for blood pressure, glucose and immunizations.

# TTUHSC PHARMACY RESEARCHERS AWARDED CPRIT FUNDING

The Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) announced Sept. 14 it was awarding a \$2.5 million grant to Richard Leff, Pharm.D., and the North Texas Clinical Pharmacology Cancer Core, a group of researchers from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Pharmacy campus in Dallas.

Leff, a professor for TTUHSC's Department of Pharmacy Practice and senior associate dean for the School of Pharmacy's clinical and translational research, said there is urgent need for translating basic cancer research discoveries into improved care for cancer patients and better interventional tools to cure and prevent cancer. To assist basic cancer researchers and physicians in developing better methods for testing new cancer drugs and cancer treatment therapies that result from these efforts, Leff and a team of TTUHSC School of Pharmacy collaborators have established the North Texas Clinical Pharmacology Cancer Core, a state-of-the-art analytical facility operating in the Dallas Medical District.

"Our team has expertise and state-of-the-art instrumentation to help cancer investigators with designing studies to optimize our

understanding of drug movement in the body, the action of drugs and the best approaches to administer the drug and enhance cures while reducing unwanted side effects," Leff said.

Such testing, Leff added, will assist investigators to better understand how cancer drugs work in the body, how the drugs treat cancer and how to avoid unwanted effects of cancer drugs.

"In general, the research team of this core will support translational researchers to do research on what cancer drugs do to the body and what the human body does to the drugs," Leff said. "Continued funding will keep the Clinical Pharmacology Cancer Core open and operational, upgrade our laboratory and expand our research capacity and capability to meet clinical pharmacology needs of North Texas cancer investigators."

The Clinical Pharmacology Cancer Core includes Claudia Meek, Ph.D., Carlos Alvarez, Pharm.D., and Ronald Hall, Pharm.D., from the TTUHSC School of Pharmacy campus in Dallas; and Paul Trippier, Ph.D., from the TTUHSC campus in Amarillo.



## PARKER RECOGNIZED AS A TEXANS CARING FOR TEXANS

Each year state agencies from the upper 26 counties in the Texas Panhandle are invited to select an employee or team of employees to receive a Texans Caring for Texans award. The award recognizes these state employees for the effort they put forth to positively impact their communities. The event was created in 1996 by former State Representative David Swinford.

Thomas Parker, Pharm.D., from the School of Pharmacy was among the recipients from the TTUHSC campus in Amarillo.



## PHARMACY FACULTY RECEIVE FUNDING, PASS TEST

Two School of Pharmacy faculty members recently received good news. Leukemia Texas awarded Paul Trippier, Ph.D., a \$20,000 grant to continue his life-saving leukemia research. Trippier is an assistant professor for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

In addition, Assistant Professor Les Covington, Pharm.D., passed the Certified Geriatric Pharmacist exam. Covington was one of two School of Pharmacy faculty members from the Department of Pharmacy Practice to pass the exam. The other was Kalin Clifford, Pharm.D., from the Dallas/Fort Worth campus.