

PharmTox Fights COVID-19 Week of August 10-14, 2020

Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Shrum!



Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Shrum on his successful dissertation defense on Tuesday, August 11! Stephen's dissertation research focused on evaluating a new therapeutic to reduce injury to donor kidneys caused by cold storage. Stephen's mentors were Drs. Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow and Nancy Rusch.

Stephen joined the department as a graduate student in the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences (IBS) program in 2014. He became a scholar of the Systems Pharmacology and Toxicology (SPaT) T32 Training Program in 2015 and was awarded an American Heart Association Pre-doctoral Fellowship the following year. We wish Dr. Shrum continued success and look forward to following all his future accomplishments!

Dr. Laura Ewing Accepts Postdoctoral Fellowship

Dr. Laura Ewing, who defended her dissertation on July 20th, was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship with Dr. Michael Birrer in the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute at UAMS. Dr. Ewing will be evaluating microbiome changes in ovarian cancer. She also will assist with identifying biomarkers of refractory ovarian cancer. Best wishes, Dr. Ewing!



Accepted Manuscript by Melissa Clemens and Joel Vazquez



One of two final papers, drafted by graduate student Melissa Clemens before her untimely death in May, was accepted by the journal, *Liver Research*. The publication titled, "Pre-treatment twice with liposomal clodronate protects against acetaminophen hepatotoxicity through a pre-conditioning effect" was co-authored by graduate student Joel Vazquez.

The role of macrophages in acetaminophen (APAP) toxicity is controversial. Early studies demonstrated that macrophage inhibitors reduce APAP-induced liver injury, whereas later work revealed that total ablation of macrophages with a single dose of liposomal clodronate (LC) increases the injury. Melissa was evaluating repeated injections of LC to more thoroughly deplete macrophages for an otherwise-unrelated project, and surprisingly observed that the repeated treatment protected against APAP toxicity. Further investigations indicated that the new treatment regimen activates an antioxidant response through Nrf2.

Department Spotlight: Pam Kahler

Our featured department member this week is program manager, Pam Kahler, nominated by Dr. Rusch. Pam has been instrumental in keeping the department operating during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to assisting faculty members, staff and trainees in many ways, this masked administrator serves as the program manager of the T32 SPaT Training Program and the CTSA-funded Health Science Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HSIE) Training Program. Pam is upbeat even during the pandemic and sees a silver lining in every cloud. "Storms are inevitable and no matter how bad they seem, they eventually pass and the sun comes out. In the mean time, we've all learned how to utilize technology better which will hopefully make life easier post pandemic. Plus, we have extra time to come up with new ideas and recipes for future Donut Fridays!"



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.