

# PharmTox Fights COVID-19

Week of March 8-12, 2021

## Dr. Nancy Gray Receives Subaward from University of Kentucky



President of BioVentures, LLC, professor Nancy Gray recently received a subaward from the University of Kentucky, which is part of an existing STTR grant titled “STTR: Southeast Xlerator Network”. The subaward establishes UAMS as a formal partner of XLerateHealth, which is a NIH-sponsored innovation accelerator for the Southwest IDeA states. The subaward will provide UAMS entrepreneurs with direct access to the mentors, training programs and investors associated with XLerateHealth. Dr. Gray will be responsible for identifying seminar speakers, participating in training programs, and generally serve as a conduit between Arkansas entrepreneurs and the accelerator program.

## Dr. Leung Submits VA Merit Award Application

Associate professor Ricky Leung submitted an application titled “Epigenetics, heavy metals, and associated disease in veterans exposed to open burn-pit toxicants” to the Veterans Administration for a four-year Clinical Science Research and Development Merit Award. Dr. Leung is co-PI on this application with Dr. Kalpana Padala, a VA clinician from the Department of Geriatrics at UAMS. Professor Shuk-Mei Ho is a co-investigator.



The long-term effects of burn pit pollution encountered during military service on Veterans’ health are unknown. Dr. Leung and Padala’s hypothesis is that burn pit exposure causes metals to accumulate in the body, which change gene function to cause long-term health problems. The project seeks to establish the relationship between burn pit exposure and adverse health outcomes, and discover novel molecular biomarkers for toxic exposure and diseases. The investigators hope that their results can be used in the future to predict which Veterans will have exposure-related health problems in order to implement better strategies for prevention and treatment.

## Dr. Mitch McGill to Serve on C-Path Hepatotoxicology Working Group



Assistant professor Mitch McGill has been appointed to the Hepatotoxicity Working Group (HWG) of the Predictive Safety Testing Consortium (PSTC) in the Critical Path Institute (C-Path). Established in 2005, C-Path is a non-profit, public-private partnership with the US FDA. The purpose of the organization is to improve drug development by creating standards and so-called Drug Development Tools (DDTs) to guide the pre-market evaluation of drug safety and efficacy. Dr. McGill was invited to join the HWG in mid-2020 by Executive Director of the PSTC, Dr. John-Michael Sauer, based on his expertise and research in liver injury biomarkers. Consortium members voted to approve his appointment last month to make him an official collaborative member.

## Don’t Forget to Spring Forward Saturday Night!

Daylight Savings Time begins Saturday night. Don’t forget to set your clocks ahead one hour before going to bed!

