



College of Pharmacy
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

**Report to the
Texas Pharmacy Congress
June 3-4, 2024**

APhA Meeting Brings Aparasu, Thornton Honors and Varkey Installation

Two UHCOP faculty members and administrators – Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D., FAPhA, and Douglas Thornton, Pharm.D. Ph.D., – were among the honorees at the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Annual Meeting & Expo March 22-25 in Orlando, Fla.

Mustafa & Sanober Lokhandwala Endowed Professor and Chair of the college's Department of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy, Aparasu was named the 2024 APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Research & Science (APRS) Research Achievement Award recipient. Aparasu is recognized as a leader in health outcomes research and pharmacoepidemiology with a focus on improving the quality of medication use in older adults.

An associate professor and director of the



Prescription Drug Misuse Education and Research (PREMIER) Center, Thornton was recognized with the APhA 2024 Generation Rx Award. Thornton has been on the forefront of statewide efforts to gain control of the opioid epidemic that has devastated families and communities across Texas and beyond through The PREMIER Center, which serves as a source for professional

education, research expertise, and outreach services.

The meeting also saw UHCOP alumnus and Dean's Advisory Council member Alex C. Varkey, Pharm.D., M.S., FAPhA, installed as 2024-25 APhA President.



From left, UHCOP Dean F. Lamar Pritchard, TPA Executive Director Debbie Garza, The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy Dean Deanna Kreitz, and APhA Executive Vice President & CEO Michael Hogue attend the President's Celebration in honor of 2025 APhA President Alex C. Varkey, center.

Hu, Cuny Receive \$1.4M CPRIT Grant for FAP Drug Discovery Research

UHCOP's Ming Hu, Ph.D., Diana S-L. Chow Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery and Development, and Gregory Cuny, Ph.D., Joseph P. & Shirley Shipman Buckley Endowed Professor of Drug Discovery, received a \$1.4 million Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) grant to fight familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP).

FAP is a rare genetic disorder of the gastrointestinal tract that can cause hundreds or thousands of polyps inside the colon or rectum, and no effective treatments exist for the disorder. Hu and Cuny are set to design new drugs to battle FAP, ones that will inhibit the activity of COX-2 in specific local areas of the body without affecting the entire body.

"We propose to develop locally bioavailable selective COX-2 inhibitors that are only available in the colon to suppress colonic COX-2 expression and reduce prostaglandin E2 levels, which is known to promote tumor growth," Hu said.

HOPA Recognizes Ononogbu for DEI Activities

UHCOP Research Assistant Professor Onyebuchi Ononogbu, Pharm.D., BCOP, was recognized with the 2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Award from the Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA) at the 2024 HOPA Annual Conference April 3-6 in Tampa, Fla.



Ononogbu's research is focused on health disparities, sickle cell disease, and multiple myeloma. She maintains a clinical/research site at UT Physicians Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center.

The award recognizes pharmacy practitioners who have demonstrated a commitment to improving DEI within HOPA, their institution, practice area or the profession.

Students, Faculty and Staff Earn Honors at TSHP Annual Seminar

UHCOP students, alumni, staff and faculty drew several top honors at the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists Annual Seminar April 5-7 in Round Rock.

For a third consecutive year, a UHCOP team has won the case-based Leadership Challenge. Recent graduate **Adam Siddique, Pharm.D. ('24)**, and third-year Pharm.D. students **Gia Tran, Julia White** and **Emmanuel Iruru** secured the title this year. Siddique has been on the winning team all three years, while Iruru is making his triumphant return from 2022.

Fellow UHCOP students **Abhishek Singh, Van Vo, Kotoko Ai** and **Valerie Nguyen** were among the finalist teams in the competition.

Lamees Loubani, Pharm.D. ('22), M.S. ('24), who is completing her PGY2 residency at Texas Children's Hospital after earning The Houston Program M.S. degree at UHCOP, received an Honorable Mention in



UHCOP students *Abhishek Singh, Valerie Nguyen, Kotoko Ai and Van Vo.*

the Resident/Fellow/PGY2 Category of the TSHP Research & Education Foundation Research Poster Competition.

THP/Houston Methodist Hospital residents **Atra Mouser, Pharm.D. ('22), M.S. ('24)**, who is completing her PGY2 year, and **Alexis Hyman, Pharm.D., MBA, PGY1 resident/UHCOP M.S. student**, were sworn in as Chair-Elect and Member At-Large, respectively, of the New Practitioners Section. Mouser succeeds 2023-24 Chair and THP alumna **Niaz Deyhim, Pharm.D., M.S. ('20), BCPS, HMH pharmacy administrative**

specialist and system director of the Longitudinal APPE Program.

Siddique received the John Peyton Hudlow and Mark Tamble Memorial Scholarship, while alumnus and current THP Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center PGY1 resident/UHCOP M.S. student **Michael Torano, Pharm.D. ('23), MBA**, received the Richard Cadle Mentoring Scholarship for Pharmacy Leadership Award.

Outgoing TSHP President and THP alumnus **Rodney Cox, Pharm.D., M.S. ('11)**, bestowed Cuellar Star Awards to several individuals, including **Divya Varkey, Pharm.D., M.S.**, UHCOP clinical associate professor and director of the THP M.S. program, who ended her term as 2023-24 chair of the Communications Council.

UHCOP Instructional Lab Manager **Sherrie Myers, RCPHT**, was honored with the Mike Knapp Pharmacy Technician Award.

UHCOP alumna **Diane B. Ginsburg, Ph.D., M.S., R.Ph., FASHP**, associate dean for healthcare partnerships, clinical professor of pharmacy practice, G.D. Searle & Co. Endowed Fellow in Pharmacy and Provost's Distinguished Service Faculty at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, presented "Embracing the Nonlinear Path: Words of Wisdom from the 2024 Harvey A.K. Whitney Awardee" March 7 in a special session of the college's John & Aimee Mohr Clinical PPTR Seminar Series.



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UHCOP and the Phi Lambda Sigma Pharmacy Leadership Society Upsilon Chapter hosted **Denise M. Jonathan, Pharm.D. ('05)**, vice president, health plan services at KelseyCare Advantage, as the 2024 James McCarty Leadership Lecturer April 22.

121 Pharm.D., Ph.D. and M.S. Degrees Awarded at 2024 Commencement



At the UHCOP 2024 Commencement May 9, the college conferred 105 Pharm.D., 10 Ph.D. and six M.S. degrees for the 2023-24 academic year. Within the class were 23 Rho Chi Society and 13 Phi Lambda Sigma members.

College Honors Top Preceptors of 2023-24

At UHCOP's Class of 2024 Graduation Awards Reception May 8, the college recognized individual pharmacy practitioners and sites for their outstanding experiential preceptorship during the 2023-24 academic year. The honorees were:

- Ambulatory Care Preceptor – **Thanh Nguyen, Pharm.D. ('11)**
- Community Preceptor – **Brandon Casarez, Pharm.D. ('17)**
- Faculty Preceptor – **Amelia Sofjan, Pharm.D.**

- Health Systems Pharmacy – **University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center**
- Hospital Pharmacy Preceptor – **Mohammed Fahimuddin, Pharm.D.**
- Institutional Patient Care Preceptor – **Kayta Kobayashi, Pharm.D.**
- Outpatient Pharmacy – **Revive RX Pharmacy**

Student News

The UHCOP Chapter of the **Hispanic Pharmacy Student Association (HPSA)** won the 2024 Outstanding Student Organization Award at the 39th Annual Campus Leaders Ceremony hosted by the Center for Student Involvement (CSI) April 8.

Among the events and activities noted by leadership in the nomination letter, the chapter engaged with the campus and greater Houston community through events such as the City of Houston Mayor's Back 2 School Fest, Pharmilia Hour, a vaccine workshop and the Consulate of Mexico "Day of Health" Health Fair.

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The UHCOP Chapter of the **Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists (SSHP)** has been recognized as a 2023-24 American Society of Health-System Pharmacy Outstanding Professional Development Award recipient for its Residency Bootcamp. The chapter was one of 20 nationwide to receive the honor.

Completing its eighth year, the Residency Bootcamp is presented by students/residents of The Houston Program and is an intensive seven-part program in which third-year Pharm.D. students have their resumes reviewed, engage in mock interviews, and participate in an open-forum Q&A session.

Faculty @ Research News

Symposia Focus on Clinical and Translational Research, Geriatric Safety

Nearly 200 practitioners, researchers, students and postdoctoral trainees combined exchanged insight and research at two symposia in April.

Funded by a five-year National Institute on Aging grant, the Geriatric Medication Safety Symposium (GMSS) is a collaboration of UHCOP and UTHealth McGovern Medical School. The April 25-26 event featured four plenary sessions and two workshops from the perspectives of nursing, pharmacy, medicine and dentistry.

Early-stage faculty members, graduate and professional program students, and postdoctoral residents and fellows presented 21 posters and four podium talks on their research.

Leading the plenary talks and workshops were **Michelle A. Chui**, Pharm.D., Ph.D., FAPhA, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy, **Yong-Fang Kuo**, Ph.D., University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), **Timothy P. McNeill**, R.N., MPH, founder of Freedmen's Health, **Amanda S. Mixon**, M.D., M.S., MSPH, Vanderbilt University, and **June Sadowsky**, DDS, MPH, UTHealth School of Dentistry.

Bilqeas Fatima, Pharm.D., M.S., UHCOP Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences-Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy Concentration candidate, won Best Poster Award for her project, "Group-Based Trajectory Modeling for Assess-



Flanked by GMSS co-chairs **Rajender Aparasu** of UHCOP and **Holly Holmes** of UTHealth, podium presenters were **Mohanad Albayyaa** of UTMB, **Sadaf Milani** of UTMB, **Olajumoke Olateju** of UHCOP and **Maria Ukhanova** of UT Health School of Public Health.

ing Oral Endocrine Therapy Adherence Pattern in HER-positive Breast Cancer Patients at DHR Health in the Rio Grande Valley."

Sadaf Milani, Ph.D., MPH, UTMB Department of Internal Medicine assistant professor of geriatrics, won Best Podium Presentation for her project, "The Association of Dementia Medications with Pain Medication in Dementia Patients with Chronic Pain."

The college's inaugural Clinical and Translational Research Symposium April 26 included 16 podium presentations and 40 e-poster presentations, as well as a keynote presentation by **Deanna L. Kroetz**, Ph.D., dean and professor of The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. Kroetz presented "Reverse Translational Studies to Understand the Molecular Mechanisms of Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy."

The top e-poster presentations recognized at the event were:

First place – **Elizabeth Eversole**, medical student at UH's Tillman J. Fertitta College of Medicine, for "Assessing the Cardioprotective Effects of Exogenous Hormone Administration in a Post-Myocardial Infarction Female Rat Model."

Second place – **Wangjia Cao**, Pharmaceutical Sciences-Pharmacology Concentration Ph.D. student at UHCOP, for "Investigating nebivolol, an anti-hypertensive drug, for treating triple negative breast cancer."

Third place – **Jun Hyoung Park**, instructor at Baylor College of Medicine, for "Antihypertensive drug nebivolol regulates mitochondrial fatty acid β -oxidation driven c-Src pathway in triple-negative breast cancer."



UHCOP research staff member **Muchen Liu** discusses his muscular dystrophy research during the e-poster presentation sessions at the CTR Symposium.

Faculty @ Research News (cont.)

Two Ph.D. students - **Olajumoke Olateju** and **Zhen Zeng** - were among the UHCOP attendees making 19 presentations at ISPOR 2024 May 5-8 in Atlanta, Ga. Olateju received an ISPOR 2024 Student Travel Award to present "Buprenorphine Adherence Trajectories, Persistence, and Healthcare Expenditures Among Commercially Insured Patients with Opioid Use Disorder." Zeng was named a Top 5% Finalist for her presentation "Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Nivolumab Versus Docetaxel for the Treatment of Advanced Non-squamous NSCLC Including Pd-L1 Testing in the United States."

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Bradley McConnell, Ph.D., Pharmacology professor and assistant chair of Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences, has received a five-year \$792,000 grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to create a summer research program, UH Cardiovascular Undergraduate Research Experience, to engage the upcoming generation of minority, underrepresented cardiovascular researchers in hands-on heart, blood and lung research.

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Rajender Aparasu, Ph.D., FAPhA, Mustafa and Sanober

Lokhandwala Professor of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy, has been appointed to the Pharmacy Quality Alliance Education Advisory Council.

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Matthew A. Wanat, PharmD, BCPS, BCCCP, FCCM, clinical professor, was recognized with a 2024 Presidential Citation Award from the Society of Critical Care Medicine.

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Natalie Rosario, Pharm.D., MPH, BCACP, clinical assistant professor, presented "Addressing Health Disparities: Diabetes Management," and **Bernadette Asias-Dinh**, Pharm.D., BCPS, BCACP, CDCES, presented "Now Leaving Statin Island" at the American Pharmacists Association 2024 Annual Meeting March 22-25 in Orlando, Fla.

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Tyler Varisco, Ph.D., Pharm.D., assistant professor, presented "'It's Not in Stock:' A Grounded Theory Approach to the Interplay Between Deception and Conflict Avoidance in Community Pharmacy Practice" at the RXSummit April 1-4 in Atlanta, Ga.

Recent Publications

Association of social vulnerability and influenza vaccination rates for Annual Medicare Enrollees at the county-level in the United States. **Tatar M**, Farokhi S, Araz OM, Deshpande A, Wilson FA. *Prev Med*. 2023 Dec;177:107782. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2023.107782. Epub 2023 Nov 21. PMID: 37980957

Cancer chemoprevention with PV-1, a novel *Prunella vulgaris*-containing herbal mixture that remodels the tumor immune microenvironment in mice. Zhang Q, Chen X, Palen K, Johnson B, **Bui D**, Xiong D, Pan J, **Hu M**, Wang Y, You M. *Front Immunol*. 2023 Nov 24;14:1196434. doi: 10.3389/fimmu.2023.1196434. eCollection 2023. PMID: 38077406

The Chemoprevention Effects of Two Herbal Mixtures on Chemically Induced Lung Tumorigenesis in Mice. Li C, Wang Y, Gao S, **Hu M**, You M. *Pharmaceuticals (Basel)*. 2023 Nov 30;16(12):1666. doi: 10.3390/ph16121666. PMID: 38139793

Review Article: Safety of Live Biotherapeutic Products Used for the Prevention of *Clostridioides difficile* Infection Recurrence. **Gonzales-Luna AJ**, Carlson TJ, **Garey KW**. *Clin Infect Dis*. 2023 Dec 5;77(Supplement_6):S487-S496. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciad642. PMID: 38051970

Reprogramming Megakaryocytes for Controlled Release of Platelet-like Particles Carrying a Single-Chain Thromboxane A2 Receptor-G-Protein Complex with Therapeutic Potential. **Lu R**, **Li Y**, **Xu A**, **King B**, **Ruan KH**. *Cells*. 2023 Dec 6;12(24):2775. doi: 10.3390/cells12242775. PMID: 38132095

The emergence of cefiderocol resistance in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from a heteroresistant isolate during prolonged therapy. Teran N, Egge SL, Phe K, Baptista RP, **Tam VH**, Miller WR. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother*. 2024 Jan 10;68(1):e0100923. doi: 10.1128/aac.01009-23. Epub 2023 Dec 8. PMID: 38063509

Linker optimization and activity validation of a cell surface vimentin targeted homo-dimeric peptoid antagonist for lung cancer stem cells. **Zhang H**, **Gomika Udugamasooriya D**. *Bioorg Med Chem*. 2024 Jan 1;97:117560. doi: 10.1016/j.bmc.2023.117560. Epub 2023 Dec 12. PMID: 38103535

Productivity Loss Among Opioid and Benzodiazepine Users in the United States: A Medical Expenditure Panel Survey From 2010 to 2019. **Thornton JD**, **Varisco T**, **Bhatt M**, **Econ P**, **Olateju O**, **Shrestha M**, **Shen C**. *J Occup Environ Med*. 2024 Mar 1;66(3):226-233. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000003029. Epub 2023 Dec 14. PMID: 38151973

The Effectiveness of Metformin in Managing Second Generation Antipsychotic-Induced Weight Gain in Children and Adolescents. **Chen H**, **Lyu N**, Calarge C, **De La Cruz A**, Chan W. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2023 Dec 20;85(1):23m14894. doi: 10.4088/JCP.23m14894. PMID: 38127310

Increased Prevalence of *Clostridioides difficile* Infection Among Pediatric Oncology Patients: Risk Factors for Infection and Complications. Murphy BR, Dailey Barnes NJ, Hwang H, Peterson CB, **Garey KW**, Okhuysen P. *Pediatr Infect Dis J*. 2023 Dec 21. doi: 10.1097/INF.0000000000004178. Online ahead of print. PMID: 38134390

Regional Variation in Opioid-Related Emergency Medical Services Transfers During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Interrupted Time Series Analysis. **Yazdanfard S**, **Thornton D**, **Bhatt P**, **Fatima B**, **Khalid J**, **Song J**, **Varisco TJ**. *Subst Use Addctn J*. 2024 Jan;45(1):74-80. doi: 10.1177/29767342231208823. PMID: 38258862

Predicting COVID-19 new cases in California with Google Trends data and a machine learning approach. Habibdoust A, Seifaddini M, **Tatar M**, Araz OM, Wilson FA. *Inform Health Soc Care*. 2024 Jan 2;49(1):56-72. doi: 10.1080/17538157.2024.2315246. Epub 2024 Feb 14. PMID: 38353707

Healthcare Resource Utilization and Discharge Readiness in Adult Hospitalized Patients With Candidemia or Invasive Candidiasis Who Received an Echinocandin: An Analysis of United States Hospitals. Lodise TP, **Garey KW**, Aram JA, Nathanson BH. *Open Forum Infect Dis*. 2024 Jan 3;11(1):ofad703. doi: 10.1093/ofid/ofad703. eCollection 2024 Jan. PMID: 38213636

Recognizing and Mitigating Racial and Ethnic Interview-Associated Microaggressions Across the Academy. **Wollen J**, Biju A, **Rosario N**. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2024 Jan 9;88(2):100644. doi: 10.1016/j.ajpe.2024.100644. Online ahead of print. PMID: 38211882

Fecal Pharmacokinetics and Gut Microbiome Effects of Oral Omadacycline Versus Vancomycin in Healthy Volunteers. **Jo J**, **Hu C**, **Begum K**, **Wang W**, **Le TM**, **Agyapong S**, Hanson BM, Ayele H, **Lancaster C**, **Jahangir Alam M**, **Gonzales-Luna AJ**, **Garey KW**. *J Infect Dis*. 2024 Jan 12;229(1):273-281. doi: 10.1093/infdis/jiad537. PMID: 38051631

Why the increase? Examining the rise in prescription medication expenditures in the United States between 2011 and 2020. **Chi W**, Song J, **Yazdanfard S**, **Daggolu J**, **Varisco TJ**. *Res Social Adm Pharm*. 2024 Jan 14;S1551-7411(24)00016-0. doi: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2024.01.004. Online ahead of print. PMID: 38302297

 Faculty Author

 Current/Recent Student, Fellow/Resident, Postdoc/Staff