



Class of 2025 White Coat Ceremony



Class of 2020 Commencement

Report to the Texas Pharmacy Congress — Aug. 26-27, 2021

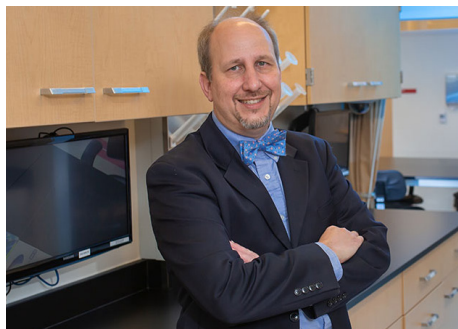
## Wallace, Students and Recent Graduates Among Top TSHP Honorees

UHCOP's David A. Wallace, Pharm.D., clinical associate professor, was recognized with the 2021 Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists' Pharmacy Mentor Award during the TSHP Virtual Annual Seminar April 9-11.

A faculty member since earning his Pharm.D. degree in 1998, Wallace serves as the college's director of Co-Curriculum, preceptor for the multidisciplinary student-run HOMES Clinic serving Houston's homeless population, and a mentor in The Houston Program in Health-System Pharmacy Administration and Leadership.

In addition, three students/recent graduates were among the winners and honorees of the TSHP Research & Education Foundation Research Poster Competition.

Winner, Resident/Fellow/Post-Graduate:



PGY1 & PGY2 Category – “Evaluation of the Use of Leapfrog’s Gold Standard Medication Reconciliation Audit Process at a Large Quaternary Care Academic Medical Center” by lead author **Ezimme C. Nnyagu**, Pharm.D., MPH, who recently entered the second year of The Houston Program with UHCOP and CHI St. Luke’s Health Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center.

Honorable Mention, Resident/Fellow/Post-Graduate: PGY1 & PGY2 Category – “Implementation of a Pharmacy Technician-Driven Service for Hepatitis C Follow-Up Care” by lead author **Tatiana Bujnoch**, Pharm.D., M.S., BCPS, who recently completed The Houston Program with UHCOP and Memorial Hermann Health System. UHCOP faculty members **Shane Tolle-son**, Pharm.D., **Bernadette Asias-Dinh**, Pharm.D., BCACP, BCPS, CDCES, and **Divya Varkey**, Pharm.D., M.S., were among the project coauthors.

Honorable Mention, Student Category – “Medication Use Evaluation of Lung Surfactant in the NICU: Beractant & Poractant Alfa” by May Pharm.D. graduate **Kathryn V. Oliveira** and UHCOP clinical assistant professor and DHR Health clinical pharmacist **Briget Martinez**, Pharm.D.

### May Grad Sheneman Earns Student Pharmacist Award from TPA

May UHCOP graduate Jared Sheneman, Pharm.D., was recognized with the Texas Pharmacy Association's Distinguished Student Pharmacist Award during the organization's 2021 Virtual Conference & Expo July 30-31.

Sheneman is a PGY1/2 Health-System Pharmacy Administration and Leadership resident at Ohio-Health – Mansfield Hospital/M.S. in Pharmaceutical Sciences post-doctoral student at The Ohio State University. As a Pharm.D. student, Sheneman worked on research/clinical care projects, authored/coauthored commentaries and research publications, served as a manager for the multidisciplinary student-run HOMES Clinic for the homeless, and completed a variety of experiential opportunities, such as nuclear pharmacy, throughout his native Rio Grande Valley.



## Significant Citations: The Lancet, eLife

Two recent UHCOP-led papers recently were published in the prestigious peer-reviewed journals, *The Lancet* and *eLife*.

**Elisabeth M. Sulaica**, Pharm.D., BCCP, clinical assistant professor, was the primary author of a review, “Arterial hypertension,” in the July 17 issue of *The Lancet*. Sulaica and her coauthors noted low rates of awareness, treatment and control worldwide for a largely controllable condition, while suggesting improvements in patient screening, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up may be realized through the exploitation of new drug targets, adoption/expansion of digital/mobile health tools in such areas as monitoring and coaching, and integration of artificial intelligence.

In a paper published July 1 in *eLife*, a UHCOP-led research team proposed a new disposition mechanism – “Hepatoenteric Recycling (HER)” – for phenolic drugs (e.g., raloxifene and ezetimibe) and phytochemicals (e.g., flavonoids and polyphenols). In the HER mechanism, the intestine serves as the metabolic organ and liver serves as the recycling organ.

The authors noted HER presents significant opportunities in predicting and preventing drug-drug interactions and toxicities in disease states as well as developing new targeted therapies. Authors included recent UHCOP graduate **Yifan Tu**, Ph.D. (first author); Ph.D. candidate **Lu Wang**; former visiting scholar **Yi Rong**; senior lab manager **Taijun Yin**; and faculty members **Vincent Tam**, Pharm.D., BCPS (AQ-ID), FIDSA, **Rashim Singh**, Ph.D., and **Ming Hu**, Ph.D. (corresponding author).

## Student News

Four Pharm.D. students/candidates were awarded 2021-22 scholarships from the Texas Pharmacy Foundation: **Erin Anderson** – TPF Ladies Auxiliary Scholarship; **Lacey Gotcher** – TPF General Scholarship; **Jaceline Tran** – TPF General Scholarship; and **Sarah Zeidat** – TPF Larry “Neal” McLaugherty Scholarship.

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**Lamees Loubani**, Pharm.D. candidate, has been elected 2021-22 Speaker of the House for the Phi Lambda Sigma Pharmacy Leadership Society’s National Executive Committee.

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Two residents in The Houston Program in Health-System Pharmacy Administration and Leadership (HSPAL) have been appointed to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Section Advisory Group on HSPAL Residents. **Alan Luu**, Pharm.D., PGY1 resident at Houston Methodist Hospital, has been appointed to the HSPAL SAG, and **Keyana Scott**, Pharm.D., PGY2 resident at Memorial Hermann Health System, has been appointed Work Group 1 Chair of the HSPAL SAG.

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**Tammie Tran**, Pharm.D. student, has been accepted into the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research’s 2021-22 Paul Ambrose Scholars Program, with UHCOP Clinical Assistant Professor **Natalie Rosario**, Pharm.D., MPH, BCACP, serving as her project mentor. With the assistance of several fellow students, Tran is spearheading a diabetes distress research project at Vecino Health Centers’ Denver Harbor Family Clinic. Tran also received a \$500 service grant from the Houston Global Health Collaborative, which will be used to support her Ambrose project.

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**Sarah Zeidat**, Pharm.D. candidate, was awarded a \$1,000 Houston Global Health Collaborative research and service grant for her project, “Assessing awareness, access, and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccinations in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) community of the Greater Houston area.” Zeidat’s project mentors are **Samina Salim**, Ph.D., UHCOP associate professor, and **Nadia Abuelezam**, Sc.D., Boston College Connell School of Nursing assistant professor and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health research fellow.

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## Faculty @ Research News

**Rajender R. Aparasu**, Ph.D., FAPhA, Mustafa & Sanober Lokhandwala Endowed Professor of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy, and colleague Holly M. Holmes, M.D., M.S., AGSF, UTHealth McGovern Medical School associate professor, have been awarded a five-year, \$250,000 R13 grant from the National Institute on Aging to establish and host the Geriatric Medication Safety Symposium. The first symposium is slated for April 2022. Aparasu also has been awarded a two-year, \$100,000 grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality for his project, “Oral Adherence Trajectories of Disease Modifying Agents and Associated Relapse Rates Among Patients with Multiple Sclerosis.”

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**Nicholas Beyda**, Pharm.D., assistant professor, and co-PIs Anne Gonzales-Luna, Pharm.D., research assistant professor, and Kevin Garey, Pharm.D., M.S., FASHP, FIDSA, received a \$86,450 grant from Cidara Therapeutics Inc. for the project, “Barriers to Hospital Discharge in Patients Receiving Echinocandins, An Epidemiologic and Root Cause Analysis.”

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**Greg D. Cuny**, Ph.D., associate professor, has received a two-year, \$447,900 R21 grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for his project, “Degradable probes for necroptosis pathway.” Cuny also has received a five-year, \$107,905 subaward from Brandeis University (PI: Lizbeth Hedstrom, Ph.D.,) for the National Institute of General Medical Sciences-funded project, “Ubiquitin-independent targeted protein degradation.”

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**Rania El-Desoky**, Pharm.D., 2020-21 UHCOP Academic Pharmacy Fellow, was named among the 2021 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy/Walmart Scholars. UHCOP’s **Elisabeth Sulaica**, Pharm.D., BCCP, clinical assistant professor, served as El-

Desoky’s program mentor. In addition, **Natalie Rosario**, Pharm.D., BCACP, UHCOP clinical assistant professor, served as faculty mentor for a 2021 AACP Walmart Scholar from her previous institution.

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**Briget R. Martinez**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor in the Rio Grande Valley Pharm.D. Satellite Program, has attained Board Certified Pediatric Pharmacy Specialist (BPPS) status from the Board of Pharmacy Specialties.

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**Kimberly A. Nguyen**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor and assistant dean for Student & Professional Affairs, has been appointed to the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists Residency Excellence Award Committee and Organizational Affairs Council.

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**Ke-He Ruan**, M.D., Ph.D., professor and director of the Center for Experimental Therapeutics and Pharmacoinformatics, has received a \$50,000 grant from Avril Biopharma Inc. for the project, “Testing a lead compound of anti-inflammatory mPGES-1 inhibitor with potential to replace COX-2 inhibitor on mouse model.”

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**Samina Salim**, Ph.D., associate professor, has received a \$50,000 grant from the HEALTH Center for Addictions Research and Cancer Prevention, a National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities-funded Center of Excellence at the University of Houston and a member of the Research Centers in Minority Institutions Program, for her project, “Examining Health Disparities and Promoting Breast Cancer Awareness and Prevention in Syrian Refugee Women in the United States.”

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# College Welcomes New Alumnus Varisco to PHOP Faculty

UHCOP recently welcomed Tyler J. Varisco, Ph.D., Pharm.D., to the college's Department of Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy (PHOP) as a research assistant professor.

A May 2021 alumnus of the UHCOP PHOP Ph.D. program, Varisco previously earned a Pharm.D. degree from The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy and a B.S. in biology from Texas A&M University.

Varisco's research focuses on identifying opportunities to improve the timely delivery of safe, equitable, and effective care for persons with opioid use disorder. He is particularly interested in expanding the role of pharmacists along the continuum of care for persons with high-risk controlled substance use.

In his dissertation work, Varisco identified that patients receiving buprenorphine for opioid use disorder frequently change pharmacies leading to potentially harmful disruptions in treatment persistence. His research is informed by 10-years of experience as a technician and pharmacist in the independent community and corporate pharmacy settings.



While completing his Ph.D., Varisco published 12 peer-reviewed manuscripts in such publications as the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, *Journal of the American Society of Addiction Medicine*, and the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*.

He also delivered live sessions at the 2020 and 2021 National Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summits, the 2020 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition, and the 2019 American Pharmacists Association Annual Meeting and Exposition. Varisco was also a 2018 Walmart/American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Scholar and is a member of The Rho Chi Honor Society.

Varisco also has been appointed as a full member of The Prescription Drug Misuse Education and Research (PREMIER) Center, where he will continue to work with his former graduate advisor, PREMIER center director and PHOP Assistant Professor Douglas Thornton, Ph.D., Pharm.D., BCPS, in the center's ongoing federal and state funded projects.

## Faculty @ Research News (cont.)

**Vincent H. Tam**, Pharm.D., BCPS (AQ-ID), FIDSA, on his appointment as a standing member of the Drug Discovery and Mechanisms of Antimicrobial Resistance Study Section (DDR) of the National Institutes of Health's Center for Scientific Review.

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**Gabriel Tao**, Ph.D. (Pharmaceutics Concentration) candidate, was recognized with three awards from the Society of Toxicology during its 2021 Virtual Meeting in March: the Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award and the Ronald G. Thurman Student Travel Award from SOT's Mechanisms Specialty Section as well as second-place in the American Association of Chinese in Toxicology (AACT) Special Interest Group and InnoStar Best Abstract Award. Tao was recognized for his abstract and oral presentation, "Irinotecan decreases intestinal UDP-glucuronosyltransferase (UGT)1A1 via TLRs/MyD88 pathway: a novel mechanism of chemotherapy-induced diarrhea."

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UHCOP recently welcomed four new postdoctoral fellows into its research and academic pharmacy programs:

**Randa Al Saadi**, Pharm.D., UHCOP – Research Fellow, Prescription Drug Misuse Education and Research (PREMIER) Center;

**Asish Biju**, Pharm.D., University of the Sciences-Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, PGY1 AMITA Health Saint Joseph Hospital – Academic Pharmacy Fellow;

**Michelle DeGracia**, Pharm.D., UHCOP, PGY1 Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center – Academic Pharmacy Fellow; and

**Harshil Patel**, Pharm.D., UHCOP – Research Fellow, Prescription Drug Misuse Education and Research (PREMIER) Center.

## College Salutes Top Preceptors, Faculty Members of 2020-21 Academic Year

UHCOP recently recognized its top experiential education site and individual preceptors for educational excellence during the 2020-21 academic year:

Health Systems Pharmacy of the Year – **Memorial Hermann The Woodlands**;

Community Pharmacy of the Year – **Kroger**;

Ambulatory Care Preceptor of the Year – **Christopher Bui**, Pharm.D., Coram Specialty Infusion Pharmacy;

Community Preceptor of the Year – **Ryan Hudson**, Pharm.D., Walgreens;

Hospital Pharmacy Preceptor of the Year – **Noel-Alan Galang**, Pharm.D., Memorial Hermann Greater Heights;

Institutional Patient Care Preceptor of the Year – **Coby Finger**, Pharm.D., Memorial Hermann Southeast; and

Faculty Preceptor(s) of the Year – **Bernadette Asias-Dinh**, Pharm.D., BCACP, BCPS, CDE, and **Jodie Gee**, Pharm.D., BCACP, CDE, UHCOP/Vecino Health Centers' Denver Harbor Family Clinic.

In addition, the recipients of UHCOP's 2020-21 Faculty Excellence Awards in May were **Dhara Divyang Surati**, Pharm.D., BCPS – Teaching; **Rajender R. Aparasu**, Ph.D., FAPhA – Research; and **Divya Varkey**, Pharm.D., M.S. – Service.



- A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, single and multiple ascending dose Phase 1 study to determine the safety, pharmacokinetics and food and faecal microbiome effects of ibezapolstat administered orally to healthy subjects. **Garey KW**, Begum K, Lancaster C, **Gonzales-Luna A**, **Bui D**, Mercier J, Seng Yue C, Ducharme MP, **Hu M**, Vince B, Silverman MH, **Alam MJ**, Kankam M. *J Antimicrob Chemother.* 2020 Dec 1;75(12):3635-3643. doi: 10.1093/jac/dkaa364.
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- Targeting MDM2 for Neuroblastoma Therapy: In Vitro and In Vivo Anticancer Activity and Mechanism of Action. **Wang W**, **Wang X**, **Rajaei M**, Youn JY, Zafar A, Deokar H, Buolamwini JK, Yang J, Foster JH, Zhou J, **Zhang R**. *Cancers (Basel).* 2020 Dec 5;12(12):3651. doi: 10.3390/cancers12123651.
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- Emerging Role of Angiotensin AT2 Receptor in Anti-Inflammation: An Update. **Patel SN**, Fatima N, Ali R, **Hussain T**. *Curr Pharm Des.* 2020;26(4):492-500. doi: 10.2174/1381612826666200115092015. Review
- Impact of recorded lectures on classroom attendance in PharmD didactic courses. Williams I, **Williams L**, Mauthner S, **Das J**. *J Adv Pharm Edu Res* 2021;11(1):1-10.
- Recent developments in antimicrobial therapy for gastrointestinal infections. Carlson TJ, **Gonzales-Luna AJ**, **Garey KW**. *Curr Opin Gastroenterol.* 2021 Jan;37(1):30-36. doi: 10.1097/MOG.0000000000000696.
- La-Beck NM, **Liu X**, Shmeeda H, Shudde C, Gabizon AA. Repurposing amino-bisphosphonates by liposome formulation for a new role in cancer treatment. *Semin Cancer Biol.* 2021 Jan;68:175-185. doi: 10.1016/j.semcancer.2019.12.001. Epub 2019 Dec 23.
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- Brain penetrating peptides and peptide-drug conjugates to overcome the blood-brain barrier and target CNS diseases. **Zhou X**, Smith QR, **Liu X**. *Wiley Interdiscip Rev Nanomed Nanobiotechnol.* 2021 Jan 20:e1695. doi: 10.1002/wnan.1695. Review.
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