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College of Pharmacy Spring 2019 Newsletter

URI College of Pharmacy

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Impacting Health Care, at Home and Abroad

The URI College of Pharmacy is always striving to make a positive impact on the healthcare environment by preparing the next generation of leaders in pharmaceutical science, providing direct care in the community, at home and abroad, and engaging in groundbreaking research projects that make a lasting impact.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will find examples of all three as our students and faculty members address the salient health issues of our time.

The College’s educational prowess was on full display in the fall when three students secured URI’s first championship in the ACCP Clinical Pharmacy Challenge, a national “quiz bowl” type competition that pits 116 pharmacy colleges from around the country against each other. Our students continued to expand URI’s reach abroad, spending January providing health services in such far-flung locations as Vietnam and Jamaica.

Our faculty members made important strides against devastating diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. In the first-ever major drug clinical trial to be conducted entirely in Rhode Island, Ryan Institute of Neuroscience Executive Director and Pharmacy Professor Paula Grammas attacked Alzheimer’s disease by targeting inflammation in the brain’s blood vessels, a study for which the College’s Pharmaceutical Development Institute played a key role. College of Pharmacy researchers also used natural compounds to seek treatment for Parkinson’s, aimed to develop new topical medications, and addressed the ever-growing opioid crisis.

These are just a few examples of the great work being done by the College’s students, faculty members and alumni. There is so much more happening now and planned for the future. Keep up-to-date on our many endeavors on the College’s website, web.uri.edu/pharmacy.

We can’t wait to see what’s accomplished next!

— E. Paul Larrat, dean

IN MEMORIUM

The College of Pharmacy lost a truly remarkable member of the family recently when Professor Emeritus Dr. Yuzuru Shimizu passed away in January. Yuzuru was internationally recognized for his research of marine toxins and other natural products, as well as his leadership and his mentorship. He will be greatly missed by the College’s students, faculty and alumni, and by the entire pharmaceutical sciences community.

High-Tech Education
Grant Funds Purchase of Cutting-Edge Drug Manufacturing Equipment.

Topical health-care products are a growing market that is projected to reach an annual value of more than $20 billion globally by 2020. URI College of Pharmacy professors are tapping into this market by providing students with hands-on training opportunities in developing and manufacturing topicals. Thanks to a recent Champlin Foundation grant awarded to the College of Pharmacy, Assistant Professor Jie Shen is the principal investigator of the project to purchase state-of-the-art equipment for the production and quality-control labs. The $146,000 grant will go toward purchasing new instruments, including the Unigator Q and the Microfluidizer®, both cutting-edge technologies that are unavailable elsewhere for educational purposes in Rhode Island. The Microfluidizer® is a particle-size reduction system that can also be used for other types of nano-medicines.

The instruments will be at the center of new and exciting courses on drug manufacturing and independent undergraduate research projects. They also will be used for continuing education opportunities for local pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists.
Pharmaceutical Development

URI Institute Plays Key Role in Groundbreaking Alzheimer’s Trial

In a pioneering clinical trial that will attack Alzheimer’s disease at its root, researchers at the George & Anne Facey Institute for Pharmaceutical Development have received regulatory approval to initiate the BEACON Study, and the College of Pharmacy’s Pharmaceutical Development Institute (PDI) has played a key role in its design.

The PDI, a current good manufacturing practices (cGMP) manufacturing suite in the basement level of Avedisian Hall, produced the placebo comparator for the BEACON Study, and the College of Pharmacy’s Pharmaceutical Development Institute delivered the active ingredient comparator for the trial.

The clinical trial looks to the possible prevention of the progression of Alzheimer’s disease. The BEACON Study represents the first of its kind in the world. The results from the BEACON Study are expected in late 2020.

The PDI-operated facility — the 1,500-square-foot cGMP manufacturing suite and a 1,200-square-foot cGMP analytical and stability laboratory, both located in the basement level of Avedisian Hall — is equipped with the latest technology to support the study.

The facility on such topics as medication administration, first aid, self-care, over-the-counter medications, and proper use of medical equipment.

National Research

Fruit Flies Help Researchers Seek Parkinson’s Treatments

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The fly has become an important tool for testing novel compounds to the flies — which have Parkinson’s given the Mucuna pruriens seed extract have demonstrated increased climbing ability. For more on the study, visit web.uri.edu/uresearch/19909.

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