Dear Friends,

The other morning, I woke to the voices on the Morning Edition of National Public Radio reporting that the use of weakened vaccine and Tamiflu could decrease the number of people affected by the avian flu by two thirds. As I listened on in my dreamy state, I heard words that snapped me to a full level of alertness—words such as administering vaccines, readiness, locations, and distributing products. My imagination took over as I pictured the citizens of our communities visiting their friendly neighborhood pharmacies to receive the medications that would truly save their lives. This may be a pipe dream in the form I stated, but maybe it isn’t far from a reality that could be ours. Can and will pharmacists meet the challenge to be part of the solution in an infectious crisis?

Life offers us many choices of how to spend our time, energy, and talents. Some of our faculty and alumni are actively working on emergency preparedness. But that isn’t the only way we can make an impact. I find it continually refreshing to see our community of students, alums, faculty, and friends seeking ways to spend their time, energy, and talents so that they have the greatest possible impact on human health and well-being. Some of us focus our efforts on caring for patients. Pharmacists everywhere faced the hurdles presented to them and their patients by Medicare Part D. Other faculty and students chose to focus on discovering better ways of treating diseases through their research. Still others choose to develop innovative ways for students to learn. In this issue of PITTPharmacy, you will find stories about how our alumni, our faculty, and our students have chosen to focus their time to make a difference.

We know we make a difference. The question we all have to ask ourselves is, “Could I make a bigger difference if I were to focus my time, energy, and talents in a slightly different way?” The answer may help us separate what is important from what is merely urgent.

Sincerely,

Patricia D. Kroboth, PhD
Since January 1, changes to the prescription drug benefits offered by Medicare are taking the nation by storm—and pharmacists are mobilizing to bail them out. Known informally as “Medicare Part D,” the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 and the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Part D), officially took effect in 2006, giving millions of Americans (Part D), officially took effect in 2006, giving millions of Americans

In the case of Rite Aid, pharmacists interview patients and provide individualized education, therapeutic advice, and follow-up services in private rooms within the store.

“There’s been absolutely fantastic,” says Jim Mastrian (BS ’65), Rite Aid’s chief operating officer. “There are a lot of people talking about medication therapy management, but we’re actually doing it. If pharmacists can be compensated for that care, we’re in a position to make it happen.”

The uncertainty of reimbursement has given pause to other

“THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT [MEDICATION THERAPY MANAGEMENT], BUT WE’RE ACTUALLY DOING IT.”

—JIM MASTRIAN

Pharmacy’s changing face

The plan’s implementation is certain to impact pharmacy financially—although to what extent, nobody knows.

Mastrian says he believes lower reimbursement will be offset by a higher volume of prescriptions from patients who were previously leaving prescriptions unfilled due to cost.

Heiser says stores also will have to work harder to win cus-

“IT’S GOING TO HEIGHTEN THE ROLE THAT PHARMACISTS PLAY IN THE COMMUNITY—NOT JUST PROVIDING MEDICATION, BUT ALSO THE INFORMATION AND ASSURANCE OF QUALITY CARE.”

—LARRY MERLO

Larry Merlo (BS ’79)

Information kiosks at the front of each store and “decision guides” are also part of the campaign, as are Medicare Tuesdays, during which patients can stop by the store for one-on-one consultations with trained advisors.

Other major pharmacy chains are offering similar outreach programs. At Brooks and Eckerd pharmacies, the education campaign began in the summer of 2005 with weekly circulars, eventually ramping up to a blitz of in-store videos, pharmacy technician greeters, and outreach visits to senior centers, nursing homes, American Legislations, and other sites.

In addition to providing information to the patients themselves, the chain also sponsored several caregiver weekends, which targeted people who work weekdays but may still

bear responsibility for a person affected by Medicare Part D.

“We’re looking at this as an opportunity,” says Enzo Cerra (BS ’73), Brooks and Eckerd’s executive vice president of marketing and merchandising. “If you’re a company that operates drugstores where the majority of the business is on the pharmacy side, and there’s a new activity that addresses an important consumer segment like senior citizens, you certainly have to take it seriously.”

At Giant Eagle, the regional supermarket chain took advantage of its dual status as a pharmacist and grocer by offering nutritionist-led store tours for people with specific health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease. By getting specific advice—and cooking demonstrations, in some cases—to an older demographic, the pharmacies hope to engage more customers who might be affected by the change.

Randy Heiser (BS ’83), Giant Eagle’s vice president of pharmacy, says the chain encouraged its customers to stop in and get a Medicare Part D worksheet. The customers handwrite personal information and list the drugs they’re taking, and a pharmacy employee enter into the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Web site, retrieving a list of plans from which the customers may choose.

Although people also could access the same CMS information from a home computer, “We thought a majority of the senior population would not have ready access to the Internet, so we provided that service to them,” Heiser says.

Sage advice

For some retailers, the changes elicited by Medicare Part D are creating new opportunities for pharmacists to assume a greater role in patient counseling. In partnership with the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy, Rite Aid has piloted a medication therapy management service.

CMS will reimburse pharmacists for medication therapy management offered to patients with chronic diseases who are taking five or more medications, or who are in selecting expensive medications.

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This feature is part of an ongoing series covering research within the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy. As a leader in research, the School of Pharmacy is not only able to advance pharmaceutical care but also can enhance its educational programs by providing students with access to up-to-the-minute information. In each article, we showcase the work of a single faculty member. Additionally, we will highlight other projects of interest of our faculty.

Under the influence
Research seeks to discover how genes affect drug therapy

F

eeling a bit blue, a woman stops by her local drugstore and buys St. John’s wort, a popular over-the-counter herbal remedy for depression. Shortly thereafter—although she’s also taking oral contraceptives—she becomes pregnant.

To the untrained eye, the woman is carrying a miracle baby, conceived despite the pill’s much-publicized, nearly foolproof efficacy rate.

But to Wen Xie, the “miracle” is a simple case of cause and effect: St. John’s wort interacts with the hormones contained in contraceptives to prevent pregnancy, deactivating them and rendering the medication useless.

Discovering such interactions and finding ways to make drugs more effective is all in a day’s work for Xie, the interim director of the School of Pharmacy’s Center for Pharmacogenetics, where he has worked since 2002, taking over as interim director in 2005.

The center focuses on unlocking the function of human genes. The potential is staggering. Of the 30,000 genes in the human genome, science really understands only 2,000, Xie says. As a specialist in the genetic regulation of drug metabolism enzymes, Xie studies methods for influencing enzyme transporters through nuclear receptors, which are protein molecules that sit on the cell surface. The transporters affect how well a body handles medications, as well as its own naturally produced chemicals, such as hormones and bioacids.

“It is known that people of different races and genders have different capabilities in terms of how the body handles chemicals, including drugs,” explains Xie, who holds both an MD and a PhD. (continued p. 8)
Under the influence

Research seeks to discover how genes affect drug therapy

“We will keep the tradition of the center, which is excellence. That’s our signature.”

—Wen Xie

(continued from p. 7)

By better understanding the enzyme transporters, “you can evaluate whether the drug is more effective or not; you can sort of predict that,” he says.

Traditionally, researchers study how enzyme transporters affect a body’s response to drugs. But when Xie’s studies demonstrated that the transporters are also critical in handling the body’s own substances, he took the field one step further. By better controlling the transporters, scientists can greatly refine the tools already used to combat devastating diseases.

Of mice and men

Among the most exciting research currently under way by Xie’s group is its foray into the fight against breast cancer.

Using mice that are genetically altered to mimic human biological responses, Xie has shown that a certain enzyme can deactivate estrogen, the hormone closely associated with the development of some forms of breast cancer.

“If you deactivate estrogen, you can prevent or trick breast cancer,” Xie says.

By blocking estrogen through the receptors, Xie believes he can refine existing cancer treatments. Furthermore, if scientists can show that a particular receptor helps in the prevention or treatment of breast cancer, they might be able to detect genetic defects or a mutation in the receptor to create a biomarker predicting a person’s predisposition to breast cancer.

“All therapeutics is based on manipulation,” he says. “If you simply know the enzyme is important, that’s valuable, but if you want to apply it to therapeutics, you have to be able to control the process.”

The idea is to create both prevention and treatment strategies. Although it’s hard to say with any certainty when health care could broadly apply the fruits of Xie’s research, he believes the process is efficient enough that it will be soon.

“It’s a novel strategy. It’s very effective, and we have a lot of experimental data to support it,” he says. “In theory, another potential advantage is you can combine multiple strategies to make the treatment much more comprehensive.”

Another strategy could combat liver disease. Researchers chemically activated a receptor in jaundiced mice that allowed the liver to clear bilirubin more efficiently. Xie believes the study will allow for future discovery of new drugs that will treat or prevent jaundice in humans.

Drugs already exist to treat the condition, but Xie says the reason why such therapies work is not well understood. By better understanding the mechanism for an established treatment, scientists can improve its potency.

“Our knowledge is the therapeutic target, we can develop more effective activators,” he says.

A two-pronged approach

For Xie, the search to treat cancer at the molecular level dates back to his earliest days as a graduate student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. It was there that he first began using mice to study the genes involved in cancer formation. He later applied similar strategies during his post-doctoral work in San Diego, Calif.

What excited him about the University of Pittsburgh was the way faculty in the Schools of Pharmacy and Medicine collaborated in their research, instead of operating in separate spheres. Although many pharmacy schools study pharmacogenetics, Xie believes Pitt has “a pretty clear advantage is you can combine multiple strategies to make the treatment much more comprehensive.”

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Pitt’s approach is unique because it marries medicine to pharmacy at every step of the research process. For example, Xie is seeking grant funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for a joint project with a professor of surgery to study the molecules and genes responsible for gallstone disease. Very little is known about hereditary factors in the development of gallstone disorders, but Xie believes Pitt has “a pretty clear clue,” and hopes to expand the research to a human study.

Another recently published work outlines the potential danger of combining Chinese herbal medicine with the blood-thinning drug warfarin. Although this is a typical pharmacy topic, Xie’s lab extends such issues to medicine by expanding his focus from drug warfarin.

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Robert B. Gibbs, PhD
Robert Gibbs studies mechanisms that contribute to brain aging and cognitive decline. His recent studies have looked at the effects of gonadal hormones, and the extent to which hormone therapy can be used to enhance and maintain function in specific neural systems in the adult and aging brain. He has shown that estradiol treatment positively affects brain function, can improve cognitive performance, and can even prevent or slow age-related cognitive decline. However, research suggests that these effects are task specific, and depend on the dose, regimen, and timing of treatment relative to age and ovarian function. Recent work stems from the theory that many of these effects are mediated by estradiol’s ability to enhance projections within the brain, enabling structural changes to occur and enhancing cognitive performance and resilience. Current studies seek to identify circuits by which hormones affect performance within specific cognitive domains. Other studies will evaluate the effects of drugs such as raloxifene (used to prevent and treat osteoporosis), and aromatase inhibitors (used to prevent and treat breast cancer), as well as the development of tools for targeted gene delivery to basal forebrain cholinergic neurons.

Dexi Liu, PhD
Gene therapy is considered one of the most promising approaches to the treatment of genetic disease. Work in Dexi Liu’s laboratory focuses on the development of new devices and synthetic compounds to achieve targeted gene delivery. His research involves a substantial amount of chemical synthesis, formulation development, engineering, molecular biology, cell biology, and animal work. Current projects include the development of a clinically applicable procedure for hydrodynamic gene delivery, the synthesis of sugar-based bifunctional compounds for gene delivery to the liver, the development of polymer-based carriers for pulmonary gene therapy, and the genome-based discovery of therapeutic genes.

Billy W. Day, PhD
A major focus of the Billy Day lab is the synthesis of potential antitumor and hemorrhagic shock-preventive agents. The lab prepares libraries of agents, also examining their biological properties, and performs collaborative testing of libraries prepared by several Pitt colleagues as well. The Day lab also performs a variety of high throughput biochemical and cell-based assays for endpoints. These data are used to develop computational models used in drug design. Day directs the University’s Proteomics Core Lab, which provides analyses of the protein complement of cells, tissues, and organisms. The resulting information is used in disease detection, prevention, control, and treatment. The lab uses sophisticated experimental design, instrumentation, and data analysis tools to evaluate the proteome, and collaborates extensively with many groups across the University.

Denise Sokos, PharmD, BCPS
Pharmacists in nearly all states have the authority to administer vaccines; however, research shows that most have not adopted this opportunity into practice. Denise Sokos’ research interests lie in the health behavior related to adult immunizations: specifically how pharmacists’ knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs affect the rate of adult immunization. She recently assessed attitudes among Pennsylvania pharmacists practicing in independent community settings toward the change in the Pennsylvania Pharmacy Practice Act allowing pharmacists to immunize adults. Her long-term research goal is to increase the number of pharmacists providing immunizations to adults.

Song Li, assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, is conducting experiments to develop novel therapies for pulmonary hypertension.
When duty calls
Students put education on hold to serve overseas

For Jim Fischer, serving his country is second nature. His grandfather and uncles have served in both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, and Fischer himself enlisted in the Army right after high school.

So when his National Guard unit was called up for active duty in Iraq in 2004, Fischer went without hesitation—even though it meant that he would lose a full year of pharmacy school in the process.

“Combat medicine gives you a greater scope of practice than you would have on the civilian side.”
—Jim Fischer (P1)

“All the people who were in my class are in their third year and getting ready to do their rotations,” says Fischer, who reverted to P1 status upon his return in November 2005. Taking time out for active duty “requires a lot of patience, I guess.”

A sergeant and medic in the National Guard, Fischer divided his time between a battalion aid station in Bayji and various missions around town, such as patrols and raids. With temperatures soaring to 130 degrees, staying hydrated was a challenge, but Fischer gained a lot of hands-on training and knowledge about various types of medication.

“I got to actually do more than the normal scope of practice for a pharmacy tech,” he says. “Combat medicine gives you a greater scope of practice than you would have on the civilian side.”

Fischer is among an elite group of students who are combining their pharmacy education with stints of active duty as members of the military. Although they take longer to earn their degrees, all say the sacrifice is worthwhile—not only for patriotic reasons, but also for practical benefits such as tuition assistance and career training.

When duty calls
Students put education on hold to serve overseas

Keeping it real
Medical simulator gives students hands-on experience

He talks and coughs. He breathes and bleeds. He can have high blood pressure, an abnormal heartbeat, or a full-scale heart attack. When his nephropathic patient is done examining, he can do it all again.

“He is SimMan, a medical simulation dummy developed through a collaboration between UPMC and Laerdal Medical Corporation. His permanent address is UPMC’s Peter M. Winter Institute for Simulation, Education, and Research, also known as the WISER center, although he has also made guest appearances at the School of Pharmacy, where he was carried on a stretcher.

For a year beginning in April 2005, Amy Seybert (BS ’94, PharmD ’96), assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, and a clinical pharmacist in cardiology at UPMC, has taken her PharmD students through the institute to hone their skills on SimMan. They begin by learning how to take blood pressure, then move on to treat an abnormal heart rhythm with drugs.

The mannequin “can cough and choke,” she says. “It can be pretty upsetting a real patient. Moreover, there’s a lot of opportunity to overcome their initial squeamishness without upsetting a real patient. Moreover, there’s a lot of opportunity to overcome their initial squeamishness without upsetting a real patient.”

To our knowledge, there is no other pharmacy school doing research on this type of education.”

Seybert expects to publish a paper in the American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education chronicling the impact of simulators on student retention of information delivered in lectures. In the fall 2005 semester, Seybert trained 97 students through the institute, measuring their knowledge of lecture material before and after simulation. Scores indicated the simulator helped them strengthen their grasp of the information after they were able to put it into practice.

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Some students have affirmed “It’s the most exciting thing I’ve ever done,” she says. “It’s as close to real life as you can imagine.” Some students have affirmed that regimen. A final grade assessed how well the students worked overall with their “patient.” Seybert or another faculty member or resident can sit behind a glass panel and provide the voice of the patient, an experience she admits can be as fun for the teacher as it is unsettling for the students.

“Keeping it real
Medical simulator gives students hands-on experience

R D T

SPRING ’06

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Picture Perfect
Photography from the School of Pharmacy

Graduation Ceremony and Dinner
April 30, 2006

Helping Hands for Healthy Hearts
February 2006

The 2005 Board of Visitors with Dean Patricia Kroboth. Seated left to right: John Curran, chair, Donald Abraham, and Daniel Cobaugh; standing: Rosalie Sagraves, John Pieper, Kroboth, Victoria Riscie, William Bailey, and Coleen Kayden.

2005–06 Scholarship Recipients

GEAR UP 2006: Galina Krikova, research assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, with Caroline Cooper of Pitt, Jacob Albin of Creighton University, Robert Brandl of Geneva College, and Nathan Hummel of Pitt.
When Balwant Dixit was putting himself through pharmacy school in India, he worked as a professional tailor, designing his own patterns with a system that is based on the relative anatomical proportions of each person.

It is a fitting example of the way Dixit—who has taught at the School of Pharmacy since 1963 and currently is a professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences—has approached the challenges in his life. When a need arises, he uses the resources around him to improvise a solution, then sets about perfecting his work. And whether he’s training apprentice tailors or teaching a new generation of pharmacists, that philosophy also has infused his approach to education.

“I personally think that a university is a place where people should have an open mind, both as teachers and students,” he says. “That is our mission, to teach people how to make knowledge-based rational decisions.”

Long a familiar face at the School of Pharmacy, Dixit initially intended to become a doctor. But in 1955, in his premedical studies, he was forced to drop out of college to support his family because of the untimely death of his father. He was successful enough to earn a living as a tailor while completing undergraduate degrees in biology and industrial chemistry, as well as two master’s degrees, one in biochemistry and the other in pharmacology. He also mentored four deaf boys and taught them the sewing trade, allowing them to run their own businesses.

Dixit arrived at Pitt in 1962 as an international fellow in pharmacology. He completed his doctoral studies and joined the faculty three years later as an assistant professor; and has served as chair of the Department of Pharmacology; interim dean, and associate dean for graduate studies and research. During his tenure as chair of the Department of Pharmacology, the department was nationally ranked, and more than 70 doctoral students completed their studies.

During his three-year tenure as the interim head of the school, he established the Departments of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacaceutics, a program in clinical pharmacokinetics, a drug information center, and a full-service pharmacy for students. Although his original idea was to use the pharmacy as a training ground for the school’s students, it since has evolved into a division of the Student Health Service.

Yet Dixit hesitates to characterize any of his accomplishments as a legacy, preferring instead to view them as ideas born out of necessity.

“I’m not the kind of person who is hung up with having certain things done because somebody should remember them,” he says.

In addition to his work in pharmacy, Dixit also established the Center for the Performing Arts of India as an exchange agreement between Pitt and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Dixit’s interest in presenting Indian performing arts to Americans began soon after he arrived in Pittsburgh and found the area devoid of Indian culture.

In response to this void, he met with other students from Pitt, Duquesne University, and Carnegie Mellon University, and cofounded the Indian Association of Pittsburgh, which organized cultural activities. In 1985, he was asked by the government of India to help arrange nationwide performances and workshops for the Festival of India. Within three months, he raised $80,000 for the project and designed a detailed program for 27 musicians; the rest is history.

Until 2003, when the center’s national programming ended for various reasons, Dixit had arranged more than 1,800 concerts in the United States, exposing the nation to the world of classical Indian music.

Although he has never taken any money for his efforts, it is unmistakably hard work. Dixit and his wife, Vidya, meticulously planned details such as health insurance and tax obligations, hosted musicians at their home, and prepared brochures and tickets in marathon sessions at their kitchen table.

Today he is working to bring qualified teachers from India to Pittsburgh to offer courses in Indian classical music to students from local universities.

Although he is 73, Dixit is not contemplating retirement yet, but when it comes he hopes to be ready to take on new projects. An accomplished cook, he once thought of opening an Indian restaurant since he characterized existing health care in Pittsburgh as “medio- cre,” and believes there is a market for something better. Already, he has prepared buffets for upwards of 200 people, and is remodeling his home kitchen to include commercial-grade appliances.

He is also passionate about improving the world around him. Whether it’s a broken traffic light, a faulty medical billing process, or a misplaced dumpster, if Dixit notices a problem, he will start making phone calls—stopping only when the issue is resolved.

“My wife and other people say, ‘Why are you so interested in doing these things?’” he says. His answer is simple: “Why should I keep quiet? I’m a person who wants to speak my mind.”
Our Faculty

Amy Seybert (BS ’94, PharmD ’98) assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, was one of four faculty members University-wide to receive the 2006 Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award. Chancellor Mark Nordenberg commended Seybert for her teaching excellence in the PharmD program as well as in the postgraduate residency and continuing education programs. Seybert has introduced innovative teaching methods into her classes and has the distinction of being the first within all schools of pharmacy in the United States to use patient simulation education within the curriculum. Seybert established and directs the specialty residency program in cardiovascular pharmacy practice.

Tanya Fabian (PharmD ’98, PhD ’03) has been appointed director of pharmacy research and pharmacy services at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, effective February 1, 2006. In addition, she was named assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics. As the pharmacy director, Fabian has clinical responsibilities that focus on developing, implementing, and evaluating psychiatric pharmacy services as part of an interdisciplinary team. Fabian also has been invited to serve on the selection panel for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ (ASHP) Section of Clinical Specialists and Scientists. The section’s members include pharmacists interested in advancing science and providing scientific and clinical specialty practice leadership with ASHP.

Scott Mark, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, has been invited to serve a two-year term on the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Foundation Research Advisory Panel. This panel consists of pharmacy research experts who help guide the foundation in its research efforts and assist the board and staff in establishing research priorities and identifying funding opportunities.

Ted Rice, MS, associate professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, was elected chair-elect of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ (ASHP) Section of Clinical Specialists and Scientists. The section’s members include pharmacists interested in advancing science and providing scientific and clinical specialty practice leadership with ASHP.

Kristine Schonder, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, received the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy American Pharmacists Association Academy of Student Pharmacists Faculty Member of the Year award. Schonder is an invited speaker at several national meetings last fall including the 2005 American Society of Nephrology meeting, the 13th North America International Society for the Study of Xenobiotics, the Keystone Symposium on Tissue-Selective Nuclear Receptors, and the 2005 Land O’Lakes Conference on Drug Metabolism and Applied Pharmacokinetics.

Our new faculty members are Beth Mimsigh (PhD ’79), senior lecturer of pharmaceutical sciences; Christine Scelsi (BS ’90, PharmD ’94), assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics; and Takafumi Tasaki, research assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

Joanne Kowiatek (BS ’77) was promoted from instructor to assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, and Susan Skledar (BS ’88) was promoted from assistant to associate professor of pharmacy and therapeutics.
Our Students

Kristin Bigos, a predoctoral fellow in pharmaceutical sciences, has been awarded the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award, a predoctoral fellowship funded by the National Institute of Mental Health to study the impact of acute drug response on functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) signal. The study specifically focuses on the effects of the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, citalopram, on neuronal activation elicited during an affective task using fMRI, and aims to evaluate the impact of a polymorphism in the promoter region of the serotonin transporter gene.

Rama Sivasubramanian, graduate student, received an American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists travel award to the annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn., in November 2005 for her poster “Valerian does not alter acetaminophen glucuronidation.” Raman Venkataramanan, professor of pharmaceutical sciences, and Reginald Fray coauthored the poster.

Nicholas Kernich (P2) was awarded a scholarship from the National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation. Students selected for the foundation scholarships must be enrolled as full-time pharmacy students, have experience in chain community pharmacy, and have a desire to pursue a career in chain community pharmacy. Students are evaluated based on their career goals, interest in chain community pharmacy practice, and their credentials, including leadership activities and professional and community involvement. Kernich was one of 32 students selected from schools of pharmacy across the country.

Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) members Kristen Topolosky (P2), David Julian (P3), Christine Huber (PharmD ’05), and Jeanine Bucchi (P4) competed in the NCPA Pruth-Schulte Student Business Plan Competition. This is the first national competition of its kind within the profession of pharmacy, in which pharmacy students design a business plan to purchase an existing independent community pharmacy or develop a new community pharmacy. These four students placed 12th nationally at NCPA’s 107th annual convention in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in October 2005.

Jennifer Stover (P4) received the School of Pharmacy’s American Pharmacists Association Student of the Year award.

Stephanie Spence (P3) and Kamille Whitters (P3) were recognized at the Student National Pharmaceutical Association’s (SNPhA) annual meeting for their presentation on the effect of direct-to-consumer advertising on prescribing. They also earned appointments to the SNPhA national executive board.

Margie Snyder (P4) was appointed as student forum member of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ Commission on Therapeutics, which focuses on issues related to drug therapy and societal drug use and develops position statements and therapeutic guidelines regarding such topics.

The school had another outstanding year in support of the annual Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Walk for the Cure. More than 130 walkers participated and raised $2,863. This strong showing of support netted the school a fourth-place finish in total dollars raised for school walk teams.

Our Alumni

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Our Society Discussed Job Opportunities at the 2005 Career Expo.

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Our Patients

Undergraduate students, graduate students, and international students have an annual opportunity to present their research at the SNPhA annual meeting for their presentation on the effect of direct-to-consumer advertising on prescribing. They also earned appointments to the SNPhA national executive board.

Margie Snyder (P4) was appointed as student forum member of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists’ Commission on Therapeutics, which focuses on issues related to drug therapy and societal drug use and develops position statements and therapeutic guidelines regarding such topics.

The school had another outstanding year in support of the annual Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Walk for the Cure. More than 130 walkers participated and raised $2,863. This strong showing of support netted the school a fourth-place finish in total dollars raised for school walk teams.

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We're Number One!

Congratulations, alumni! The School of Pharmacy is ranked the number one school within the University of Pittsburgh in alumni engagement. Thank you for your continued support!

Robert Abraham (PhD ’81) formerly of the Burnham Institute, is now the vice president of oncology research at Wyeth in Pearl River, N.Y. He was honored as a University of Pittsburgh Legacy Laureate last fall, a distinction that is awarded to individuals who have achieved accomplishments that are recognized well beyond their own discipline. While at Pitt, Abraham referred to the celebration at Wyeth regarding the results of the initial clinical trials on Rapamycin and its use to treat metastatic breast cancer. Rapamycin also appears to have benefits in treating breast cancer. Rapamycin also was honored as a University of Pittsburgh Legacy Laureate last fall, a distinction that is awarded to individuals who have achieved accomplishments that are recognized well beyond their own discipline. While at Pitt, Abraham referred to the celebration at Wyeth regarding the results of the initial clinical trials on Rapamycin and its use to treat metastatic breast cancer. Rapamycin also appears to have benefits in treating breast cancer.

Richard Bertz (PhD ’95) was recently named the director of clinical discovery for infectious diseases at the Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceutical Research Institute. He left his position at Abbott to move and assume his new responsibilities in Princeton, N.J.

Anthony Civello (BS ’87) assumed the top elected position of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores in April 2005. He will serve as chair of the organization for two years. Civello is the chain president, executive officer, and chief executive officer of Keri Drug Inc., a regional pharmacy chain headquartered in Durham, N.C.

Tim Davis (PharmD ’00) and Brenton Cornwell (PharmD ’96) spent time last summer assisting Hurricane Katrina victims. Davis, a pharmacist at Brighton Pharmacy, went to the area with a truckload of supplies that he obtained from pharmaceutical companies. Cornwell, a pharmacist for Rite Aid, went with two other Rite Aid pharmacists, and actually lived in a pharmacy while in New Orleans, La.

Wayne Howard (BS ’79), director/leader of hospitalist services at the Lehigh Valley Hospital at Muhlenberg, became board certified in internal medicine.

Julie Aaron Kasing (PharmD ’03) was married last fall and also recently accepted a new position as clinical pharmacist for Accredo Therapeutics in Warrendale, Pa.

Douglas Landy (BS ’99), MBA, accepted a position with Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Securities in Manhattan, N.Y. He is a specialty pharmaceuticals equity analyst.

Dominic Lio (BS ’92) district manager for Pfizer Inc., accepted a district manager position in Pittsburgh for the newly formed anti-infective division for Pfizer. Lio will cover all of Pennsylvania with the exception of the Philadelphia area.

Our Alumni

Alicia (Gallagher) Mack (BS ’96) is now at Allergan as the manager of regional scientific services within its neuroscience division. Mack and her husband, Rob, became the proud parents of McCauley Collette Mack this past March.

Baby Oliver Daniel Marks arrived in January to Ily (PharmD ’00) and David Marks. Big brother Braden, Mommy, and Daddy are doing quite well and enjoying the new addition to their family.

Amy Pittenger (MS ’96), PharmD, is the assistant director of professional education in the Office of Educational Development at the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy. She has the responsibility for online curricula development for pharmacy programs. She also coordinates pharmacy-related educational programs for other professional schools and is responsible for continuing education.

In Memoriam

Sam Conte (BS ’41) Zolten Lazer (BS ’49) Walter Manns (BS ’50) Ali Giampolo Phar (BS ’92) Elizabeth Schottenheimer (BS ’28) Kate Stamm (BS ’99)

Alum heads national Greek American group

F or half a century, Franklin Manios (BS ’57) has proudly carried the torch of his Greek heritage through his membership in the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA). In 2004–05, the Warren, Ohio, resident served as the group’s supreme president, having been elected by its membership. Founded in 1922 to combat bigotry and help Greek immigrants assimilate into American society, the association is the oldest and largest of its kind in the nation. During his tenure, Manios led an annual excursion to Thessaloniki in March 2005. He also met with Greek President Karolos Papoulias and Parliament President Anna Psarouda-Benaki.

The association expanded to include new chapters in the United States and overseas, as well as a larger Internet presence. Manios says he believes the organization will continue to grow by enhancing its communications. “What we’ve been able to accomplish is rather admirable given the minimal amount of resources we appropriate toward communications,” he says. “However, what we could do with the proper resources is mind-blowing.”

Manios was born in Weirton, W.Va., the son of Greek immigrants, two years after graduating from the School of Pharmacy. Today, his daughter also works in the family business. In addition to his accomplishments with AHEPA, Manios received the Ohio Pharmacist Centennial Award in 1978 from the Ohio State Pharmaceutical Association (now the Ohio Pharmacists Association) and an “independent super-star” by the trade journal Drug Topics, which also recognized him with Readers Choice Awards in 1998, 2000, and 2002, and received professional recognition awards from Eli Lilly, Abbott Labs, E.R. Squibb, and Parke Davis. He is the assistant director of professional education in the Office of Educational Development at the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy. She has the responsibility for online curricula development for pharmacy programs. She also coordinates pharmacy-related educational programs for other professional schools and is responsible for continuing education.
Serving Students Effectively
Walgreens gift helps renovation turn Student Services into ‘one-stop shopping’

Prior to the renovations, which were completed in November 2005, the various services were split between the ninth and 11th floors. With the official opening in early 2006, the center became an instant hub.

Snyder says the corporate gifts that make such improvements possible are crucial to the school’s ability to educate the pharmacists of the future.

“Most of our companies and partners that we work with are very understanding of the need to support academic institutions of pharmacy,” he says. “They were able to combine a lot of things like filing space as well as put all the areas that work with our students together. It made this area a one-stop shopping space.”

The center, which was named in honor of alumnus John Curran (MS ’68, PhD ’71) and his wife—which Snyder described as “dear friends of the School of Pharmacy”—was financed in part by a $50,000 donation from Walgreens. The gift names the office for the assistant dean of students, now known as the “Walgreens Room.”

Other naming opportunities in the center are also available, including two conference rooms. Naming rights are prestigious because they “give the company an opportunity to have their name displayed in an academic institution that’s teaching pharmacists to be lifelong learners in the profession.” Snyder says.

It also allows the company to remind students of its name every time they walk through the center, which is often. According to Snyder, approximately 450 existing students regularly visit the center, and another 500 prospective students and their families also stop by.

In fact, because admissions is located in the center, it is the first impression many prospective students have of the school. They enter a waiting room that features a plasma screen displaying student and faculty activities, some use the high-tech conference rooms, which are also available to faculty and other departments.

Yet throughout his life, Sam continued to feel a kinship with the School of Pharmacy, and brought his son to Pitt football and basketball games from early childhood. He also stressed the importance of giving back to the community, establishing a philanthropic tradition that his descendants continue.

In 2005—the 75th anniversary of Sam Shear’s graduation from Pitt—Herbert Shear’s sons, Gerard and John, created the endowed Samuel T. and Herbert S. Shear Family Scholarship Fund at the School of Pharmacy.

Each year, the fund will pay for a $10,000 scholarship for each of two upperclassmen.

“We hope it will go to students who will make a difference in the pharmaceutical field,” Herbert Shear says. “Hopefully it will also help students who have some financial needs.”

Herbert and some of Genco’s board members also have contributed to the fund, and Herbert Shear says he hopes the family will be able to meet the scholarship recipients.

“Even though I’m not a Pitt alumus, I’m an avid Pitt fan,” Herbert Shear says. “We feel very good about the scholarship, and we’re very pleased to be able to do it.”

For more information on making a gift to the School of Pharmacy, contact Director of Development Lawton Snyder at 412-624-3545 or lst3@pitt.edu.

#News #Philanthropy #Pharmacy

The Shear Family Scholarship
Family honors 1930 alum with gift to fund scholarship

The 1787 Society
We would like to extend our most sincere apologies to the members of the 1787 Society. They were accidentally left out of the report to stakeholders published earlier this year. The names will be listed in next year’s report.

The University of Pittsburgh recognizes individuals who have made gifts to the University by means of a will or trust, endowed income fund, charitable remainder trust, charitable gift annuity, life insurance, directors charitable award program, or other planned gift.
Commemorative coins honor pharmacy

From a Sumerian tablet to chemotherapy, milestones in pharmacy are captured in the impressions of 36 coins donated to the Elmer H. Grimm Sr. Pharmacy Museum on the fourth floor of Salk Hall.

The silver-dollar-sized coins are divided into seven time periods and depict events or people who contributed to the growth of the profession. Among those honored are Paul Ehrlich, the Nobel Prize winner noted for his search for a “magic bullet” to cure syphilis; Edward Kremer and George Urdang, whose History of Pharmacy: A Guide and A Survey is a familiar text to many alumni; and Emperor Frederick II, credited with pharmacy’s magna carta, the Edict of Salerno.

The coins are the centerpiece of a large pharmacy collection donated to the museum in September 2005 by John Rosencrance (BS ’60), and his wife, Jackie, of Johnstown, Pa. Curator Stanton Jonas plans to display the coins at the museum’s entrance. “It is an absolutely lovely gift,” Jonas says.  

Meet Stan Jonas, the new museum curator

Long before he took over as the curator of the Elmer H. Grimm Sr. Pharmacy Museum, Stanton Jonas (BS ’51) was fascinated with the curiosities of the profession.

Jonas served in the Air Force before managing several retail drugstores. In 1965, he became Allegheny County’s first chief pharmacist, earning a Master of Public Health from Pitt in 1972. He later became one of the county’s five district health officers before retiring in 1990.

Along the way, he acquired a sizable pharmacy collection—everything from mortars and pestles to gold-embossed stock bottles, small paper bags of herbs, and five different types of suppository molds. (His favorite pieces include a circa 1898 book from Lilly Laboratories and a three-inch-high balance from the mid-1800s, complete with tiny weights.)

Items from the collection have been displayed at the Pittsburgh Children’s Museum as well as libraries throughout Western Pennsylvania. When not in transit or in a showcase somewhere, the items rest on shelves in Jonas’ game room and garage.

So when his friend, Richard Lithgow (BS ’50), decided to retire as the museum’s curator last year, Jonas seemed a natural successor. Dean Patricia D. Kroboth interviewed Jonas at Lithgow’s recommendation, and he was appointed in June 2005.

“It’s been a real challenge to be able to fill Dick’s shoes,” Jonas says. As for his personal collection, he’s ready to part with some of it and reclaim his game room—especially since it won’t be going far. “Slowly but surely, it’s being incorporated into the Grimm collection at Pitt,” he says.