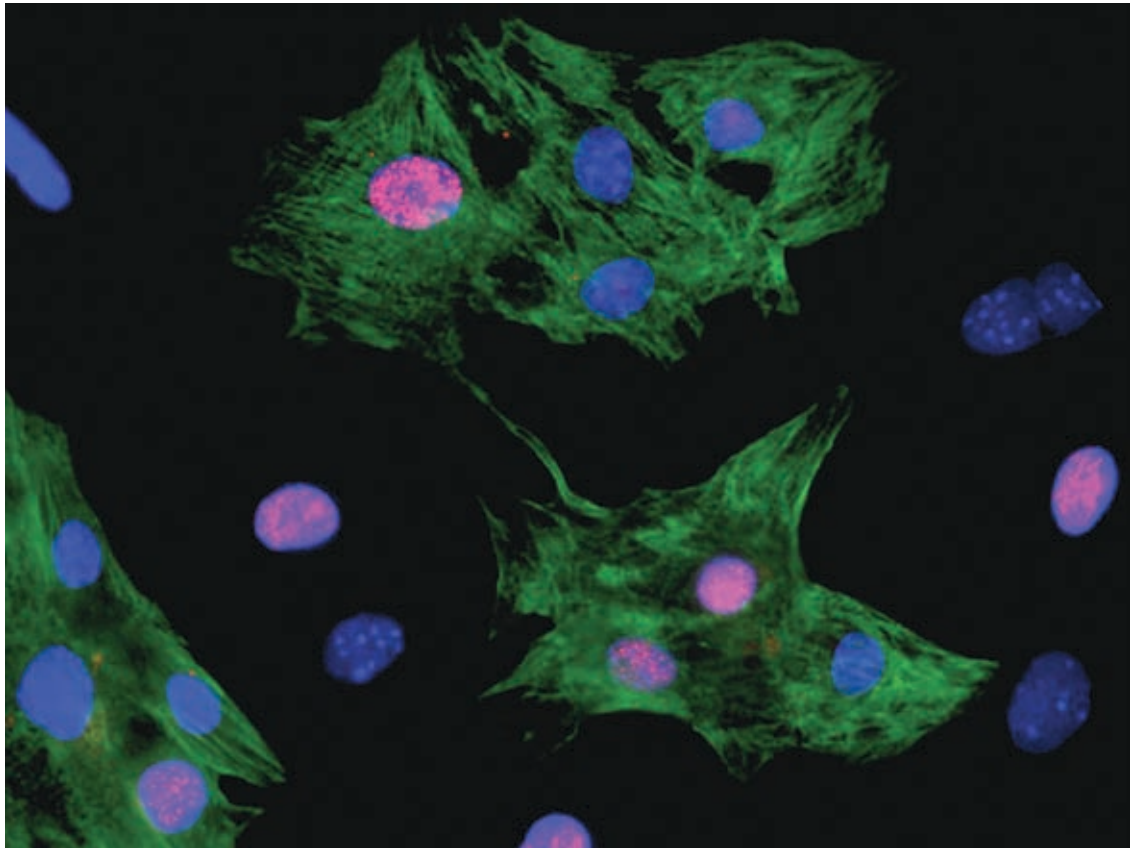


UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

PITTTPharmacy

WINTER 2007



Dear Friends,

Each time I think the reputation and environment of the University of Pittsburgh could not possibly get any better, it does. Last spring, Pitt scientists began moving into Biomedical Science Tower 3 (BST3), a state-of-the-art research facility located at Fifth Avenue and Darragh



Street. This summer, *Newsweek International Edition* ranked Pitt 10th among American public universities and 37th among universities of the world. Pitt also moved to No. 7 in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. In September, Pitt received one of only 12 Clinical and Translational Sciences Awards, an award that brings not only funding in the amount of \$83.4 million from NIH over five years, but also prestige.

So what does this good news mean for the School of Pharmacy? Four pharmaceutical sciences faculty members now have their research programs at BST3 in proximity to colleagues in the Drug Discovery Institute, which serves as an incubator for drug computational design and synthesis. The high rankings and reputation of the University make the School of Pharmacy and other schools an extremely desirable workplace for scientists and potential students worldwide—a fact that makes recruiting and retaining outstanding talent easier than it has ever been.

Finally, the new Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute created here at Pitt is destined to transform research and education with the purpose of improving patient care. The institute will facilitate interactions among bench and clinical researchers; through it, we will reach our community of patients. The institute will bring together professionals from each of the health science disciplines in the classroom and in research to enhance education and science. Proudly, School of Pharmacy faculty members participated in key aspects of the application and will be critically involved as we move forward.

So with all of these good things happening, could there possibly be any other piece of good news? Yes, and perhaps it is the biggest piece of news for the School of Pharmacy. The University administration is investing in the school with the promise of a new research pavilion that will connect to Salk Hall!

Let's just say that Pitt is a really great place to be.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Kroboth". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

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On the cover: A micrograph from Yong Tae Kwon's lab of mouse embryonic cardiomyocytes. Cardiomyocytes are cardiac cells used in his research. See the full story on page 6.

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Incoming P1 class on the steps of the Petersen Events Center with Salk Hall in the background. See page 24 for the complete picture.

Taking It to the Streets

Lamsam Program targets needy patients



Sharon Connor and Tina Scipio discuss pharmaceutical options for use in the Birmingham Free Clinic.

“I really enjoyed the work. I guess you can call it one of those life-changing experiences.”
—Sharon Connor

In the mid-1990s, a faculty member named Grace Lamsam at the School of Pharmacy launched a fledgling program with a dual purpose: to provide needy patients with the medication they required, while simultaneously teaching pharmacy students about caring for the underserved.

In those early days, the program partnered with Pittsburgh’s chapter of Health Care for the Homeless to open its locations, one of which was the Birmingham Free Clinic. During the three days the clinic was open each week, its volunteers saw about 10 or 15 patients. Today, the Birmingham Free Clinic is open five days a week and dispenses 3,000 prescriptions annually. Programs have expanded to include a smoking cessation group, Spanish translators, and pediatric specialists—all through little more than word-of-mouth advertising.

The Grace Lamsam Pharmacy Program now serves not only the Birmingham Free Clinic but homeless and low-income individuals at free primary care clinics at shelters and drop-in centers throughout Pittsburgh. It works in collaboration with the Program for Health Care to Underserved Populations, Operation Safety Net, and North Side Christian Health Center, in addition to Health Care for the Homeless.

“The need is there,” says Sharon Connor, assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Therapeutics. As a resident when Lamsam started the program, Connor found her calling in working with the underserved.

A life-changing experience

Connor first worked with interdisciplinary teams of health-care providers at free clinics in the Dominican Republic and later

at the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois before Pitt lured her back in 1999 to take over as director of what is now known as the Grace Lamsam Pharmacy Program. Lamsam now resides in a cloistered convent in Pittsburgh and is known as Sister Mary Grace.

“I can’t articulate it,” Connor says of her work in the Dominican Republic, which is where she was introduced to providing pharmaceutical care to indigent patients. “I really enjoyed the work. I guess you can call it one of those life-changing experiences: You learn about the need, but at the same time, you’re gaining so much from the people you are serving.”

Connor has taken two unpaid leaves of absence from the School of Pharmacy to work in Africa as part of Doctors Without Borders, a private, nonprofit organization that provides health care to poor and battle-scarred nations. The University of Pittsburgh honored her commitment by awarding her the prestigious Chancellor’s Distinguished Faculty Public Service Award for 2005.

For Connor, the Lamsam Program was a natural fit. “The first time I stepped into the clinic, I felt like I was back in my clinic in the Dominican Republic,” she says. “It’s a small setting where everybody works as a team, is resourceful, and is doing the best [they] can for the patients.”

Finding a way

Challenges abound for the clinic’s staff. Finding appropriate medications is a constant challenge; although manufacturers provide drugs through donations, physician samples, and patient assistance programs, managing those programs is time consuming.

“You always have to do a little

adjustment, maybe eliminate or add medications based on your budget and what you can afford, and based on what the need is," says Connor, adding that pharmacists also must determine how to get more expensive drugs to patients who can't afford them.

Today, the Lamsam Program uses a formulary that has grown over the years from acute medications for pain and infection control to also include drugs to treat chronic diseases. Hypertension and diabetes are two of the most common conditions among the clinic's patient population seen by the pharmacists in the Lamsam Program. The program is currently focusing on those diagnoses as part of a medication therapy management program at two of its seven locations.

"These people just need help. The rest of us may not have optimal care, but we probably have a regular physician and insurance. ... "

—Tina Scipio

By meeting face to face with patients, pharmacists monitor drug and food interactions, side effects, and the patients' understanding of each drug's proper use and dosage. Through such counseling and by offering supplies such as blood glucose monitors, the program aims to improve health outcomes among the clinics' patients.

Taking measure

Tina Scipio (PharmD '04) is completing a two-year fellowship in outcomes research and also is pursuing an MPH degree. As one of the Lamsam Program pharmacists, she hopes eventually to

conduct outcomes research on the program's patients, analyzing how effectively the program efforts improve the health of the underserved.

"I think I'm just naturally into that kind of thing," Scipio says about her work with the clinics. "These people just need help. The rest of us may not have optimal care, but we probably have a regular physician and insurance. ... For clinic patients to have even a minimal level of care, caring healthcare providers need to be involved."

Connor teaches an elective course for third-year students, Pharmaceutical Care for Underserved Populations, using service learning as a teaching method. Second-year students visit the clinics as part of their

experiential learning. As third-year students, they can be assigned to the clinic and the Rx Council of Western Pennsylvania, a nonprofit group that provides emergency prescription assistance to low- or fixed-income people. Fourth-year students can complete rotations in the clinic.

Connor began bringing students into the clinic after hearing feedback that the students weren't grasping concepts, like the lack of insurance or access, that she discussed in the classroom. When she brought students to the clinics, they completed paperwork to give patients access to free

medications and referrals to the clinic. Those are skills students take with them into many settings, including a typical community pharmacy, she says.

Dedicated alumni also keep the clinic running, not only providing their professional expertise but also serving as role models to the students. Once a month, most Lamsam Program volunteers work one three-hour shift at the clinic on a weeknight, an act of generosity that is not lost on Connor.

"I'm amazed that they do this, because I know how busy they are," she says. "It's a Monday night, and they've already had a long work day. And then they come and do this."

Help from our friends

In the summer of 2006, the Rite Aid Foundation made a gift to the School of Pharmacy to support the Lamsam Program in the amount of \$51,980. These funds will enable the program to upgrade computer equipment and software, supply the patients in the clinics with glucose monitoring equipment, and even pay for critical pharmaceuticals that are not covered through other sources. This gift also will make it possible for pharmacists to offer medication therapy management services to the patients. ∞

The Breakdown Lane

Research uncovers links between protein degradation and heart disease

This feature is part of an ongoing series about research within the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy. As a leader in research, the School of Pharmacy not only is 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 highlight other faculty projects of interest.

When explaining the protein degradation that is his professional passion, Yong Tae Kwon likes to use a colorful analogy:

Imagine a protein is a man on the street—indistinguishable from other men in business suits milling around. Now imagine that one of those men carries a white rose. The rose is a signal that differentiates him from the crowd.

For Kwon, an assistant professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, the rose represents ubiquitin, a small protein that can attach itself to other proteins, making it different. And it can serve as a signal that marks proteins for degradation by proteasomes.

therapies that will help cardiac patients. The idea is that if a drug could interfere with the ubiquitin system, clinicians could use it to control pathological conditions.

The balance of protein synthesis and degradation is critical to proper cellular function. Kwon has identified seven proteins as crucial to the recognition structure based on a common strand of 70 amino acids found in each protein. Kwon also studies the properties of substrates in which the breakdown of proteins can occur.

“They’re all related questions,” explains Kwon, who came to the School of Pharmacy four years ago from the California Institute of Technology.

“I do what I can do best. I try to provide the molecular basis for future drug design and application.”

—Yong Tae Kwon

That basic biological function—and its effect on issues such as cardiovascular disease—has been the focus of Kwon’s research. In July, he won a five-year, \$1.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the role of ubiquitin in the cardiovascular system. His hope is that one day his work will lead to clinical applications, such as the development of drug

Of mice and men

Kwon’s research team has spent years developing six varieties of mutant mice, with other strains still in development. Each lacks a specific protein, allowing researchers to know which proteins are associated with heart malformations, blood vessels, or physiological functions.

“We also learned at the cellular level that the system is important



Professors Yong Tae Kwon and Takafumi Tasaki work together in the Kwon laboratory.

for myocardial growth," says Kwon, referring to the ATE-1 gene, which figures prominently in the research associated with his most recent NIH grant.

Mutant mice lacking a specific protein might have malformed hearts, holes between ventricles, or problems with their blood vessels, among other devastating conditions.

"Now we know that [a particular] protein is very important for cardiac signaling and cardiac growth, which is indicated in many cardiovascular diseases," Kwon says.

If a drug is developed that interferes with the ubiquitin systems, scientists might be able one day to use that drug to control pathological conditions.

His research team took an average of one to two years to develop each specific type of "knockout"—or mutant—mouse, and then one to three years to characterize the mouse's phenotypes. But the years of patience paid off: Kwon believes he is working with the best available

model when all factors are considered, such as relevance to human physiology, animal maintenance, cost, and other issues (such as the ethical and political debate surrounding the more controversial stem-cell research).

Genesis of a scientist

Kwon describes himself as a "basic scientist," taking care to emphasize that he is not a clinician. His research yields the knowledge and ingredients necessary for future drug development; others figure out how to get the drug to the patient. Eventually, he hopes to develop inhibitors that will mimic degradation signals, aiding in drug therapies for the condition.

"We hope the research will eventually lead us to the bedside," Kwon notes.

But the origins of that yet-to-be-developed medication are rooted in Kwon's early fascination with the role certain proteins played in degradation.

"I wanted to get to the bottom of that phenomenon," he says, though at the time he began his

journey a dozen years ago, he did not know it would lead to possible applications for cardiovascular disease.

Kwon was attracted to the School of Pharmacy by the enthusiasm of its senior faculty, particularly Dean Patricia Kroboth, as well as Arthur Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine. In addition to his research responsibilities, Kwon also teaches biochemistry and prepares graduate students for careers in science.

In 2005 he published a study that found aspirin could be used to prevent aggressive secondary cancers. The study found that a protein expressed by cells in the immune system, tumor necrosis factor-related apoptosis-inducing ligand (nicknamed TRAIL), when combined with aspirin, can trigger some cancer cells to self-destruct. The findings may soon be applied in a clinical setting.

"I do what I can do best. I try to provide the molecular basis for future drug design and application," Kwon says. "Eventually I am interested in being directly involved in clinical applications when the time's right, but I like to be cautious." ∞

Seen in the Laboratory



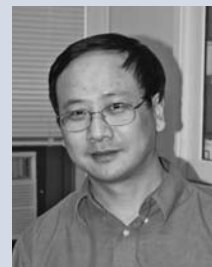
Robert R. Bies, PharmD, PhD

Robert Bies is an assistant professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Current research in Bies' laboratory encompasses the development and evaluation of new methods in hierarchical nonlinear Bayesian model building. In addition, he is evaluating automated machine learning techniques based on the genetic algorithms. Modeling methods evaluated in the lab help researchers study the effect of age and weight on citalopram clearance as well as the overall disposition of paroxetine in late-life depression and the determination of the metabolizer genotype to help stabilize the model. Additionally, the lab is studying the inspection of residuals that identified a significantly less consistent exposure to riperidone in an inpatient unit than in a nursing home.



Kim R. Coley, PharmD

Kim Coley is an associate professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Therapeutics. Coley's research interests include examining factors that impact outcomes to medications under conditions of usual care. This comprises therapeutic effectiveness, pharmacoepidemiology and drug safety, and cost evaluations. Typically, Coley works with large sets of data extracted from medical health records. Although her research cuts across many therapeutic topics, much of her work is in the fields of psychiatry and hematology. Coley has compared the effectiveness, tolerability, and cost of the atypical antipsychotics and examined emerging treatment patterns of these drugs in various populations. In the field of hematology, she has studied the impact of anemia on clinical outcomes and mortality in various populations such as the elderly and those with chronic kidney disease and congestive heart failure.



Song Li, MD, PhD

Song Li is an associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The primary interest of Li's lab is targeted delivery to pulmonary endothelium of functional nucleic acids including plasmid DNA, antisense oligonucleotides, peptide nucleic acids, and siRNA. These studies center on several issues that are critical to therapeutic applications in the treatment of pulmonary diseases such as hypertension and pulmonary fibrosis. Similar targeting strategies also have been developed for delivery of therapeutic agents for the treatment of diseases such as prostate cancer. Research conducted at Li's lab has been supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; American Heart Association; and Department of Defense.



Janice L. Pringle, PhD

Janice Pringle is an assistant research professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Therapeutics. Pringle is the lead evaluator of two federally funded state-level projects, "Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment" and "Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant" and director of the school's data coordinating center. Current projects include supervision of development of software supporting medication and therapeutic management initiatives in commercial and public pharmacy settings. Pringle was also the lead evaluator for a regional patient safety initiative involving medication and nosocomial infections.



Rhonda S. Rea, PharmD

Rhonda Rea is an assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Therapeutics and joined the faculty in 2003 as a medical intensive care unit specialist at UPMC Presbyterian hospital. Her teaching interests focus on problem-based learning. She was recently awarded the John G. Bowman Faculty Grant by the University of Pittsburgh International Exchange Endowment Fund Committee for a project affiliated with the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. She also received an Innovation in Education Award from the Provost's Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence. Rea's research interests focus on optimizing pharmacotherapy for critically ill patients with sepsis and also on antimicrobial pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic dosing strategies.



Michael Vanyukov, PhD

Michael Vanyukov is an associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Vanyukov's research interests include integrating neurobiological, genetic, psychological, and environmental information in the study of substance use disorders, which are influenced by a variety of factors. The research emphasizes better understanding of the relationship between genetic and neurobiological processes. His studies, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, are part of the genetic program at the Center for Education on Drug Abuse Research. The program is based on multidisciplinary family data encompassing all the factors in children, parents, and adolescents affected by substance abuse.

Preceptor of the Year

Respect, dedication characterize Ament's approach

When Paul Ament (BS '88) takes on students, he will find a way to teach them what they need to know.

"I have a lot of pride in the profession, so I try to reflect that by being a good role model. I try to give them a real-life view of clinical pharmacy."

—Paul Ament

"During my rotation at Latrobe Hospital, he spent most of his time with me and was able to enhance my knowledge of infectious disease and make it stronger," says Julie Kent (PharmD '06), who nominated Ament for Preceptor of the Year. "Together we went over antibiotics and pathogens nearly every day, which involved a lot of repetition. I was able to tie together information I had learned in school and apply it." Ament, a clinical pharmacist who also works for the hospital's family residency practice program, has served as a preceptor since 1990. Methodical by nature, he initially was volunteered for his teaching role.

"Pitt contacted my boss in 1990 and asked if we would take clinical students, and he said, 'No problem, Paul will be glad to do it,'" Ament recalls.

Over the years, he has refined his approach, giving students reading assignments as well as clinical experience to test practical applications and patient interaction skills. Students accompany him on rounds, and Ament asks them to explain how a drug might work in this setting.



Paul Ament and Julie Kent at the awards presentation

"I love the stimulation from students," he says. "We're in a completely teaching environment here every day, so I like their fresh ideas. I have a lot of pride in the profession, so I try to reflect that by being a good role model. I try to give them a real-life view of clinical pharmacy."

Kent, who completed her rotation in November 2005, describes Ament as "very respectful of those he has contact with on a day-to-day basis, including patients."

For his part, Ament also was impressed by Kent, whom he helped to recruit as a staff pharmacist at Latrobe's sister hospital, Westmoreland Regional. The two have remained in touch, and Kent

is preparing a cardiac drug lecture for nurse anesthetists. Ament believes Kent has an aptitude for clinical pharmacy and is trying to keep her in that professional loop.

"I feel I have experienced clinical pharmacy at its best in working with Paul," Kent says. ∞



Preceptor of the Year

Somma sets a high standard for students and preceptors

When Melissa Somma (PharmD '98) teaches students, she tries to impart a philosophy of restlessness. Rarely satisfied with the status quo, Somma is driven to improve the daily practice of pharmacy from the top down.

"She refuses to continue doing what has been done, but instead pushes the profession ahead with new ideas and high expectations for those [who] follow," says Talia Kleeb (PharmD '06), who nominated Somma, an assistant professor in the School of Pharmacy and the School of Medicine, for Preceptor of the Year.

As the director of a joint project between the University of Pittsburgh and Rite Aid, Somma is helping to

revolutionize the role of the community pharmacist. Known as Rite Care, the program is piloting patient care practices at four Rite Aid pharmacies in Pittsburgh. Somma and other faculty members are working with the chain to develop the program, which teaches pharmacists to counsel patients individually and devise a care plan for their medical regimens.

The idea, Somma says, is to create a "standardized, reproducible model" so that pharmacists can evolve into a caregiver role. Ultimately, she hopes Rite Care will expand to all community pharmacies nationally.

In 2005, Kleeb was one of the students Somma guided through the Rite Care program.

"She did wonderfully," Somma says. "What I thought was really exciting for Talia was she took the rotation because she wanted to have more patient exposure. She didn't feel she had enough experience talking to patients. She came into the rotation a bit hesitant about this experience."

But not only did Kleeb communicate effectively with patients, she also hit her stride with the staff at the pharmacy, many of whom were still adjusting to the Rite Care idea.

"She really grew a lot during this rotation, which was great to see," Somma says.

Kleeb praised Somma's approach, which included small group discussions about barriers the students faced in communicating with patients and how to overcome them.

"She challenged us to bring pharmaceutical care to the community setting in a way that would not only benefit patients, but that could be self-sustaining and successful in a business-driven environment," Kleeb says.

Somma has served as a preceptor for seven years, first at Wilkes University in 1999, then later with UPMC St. Margaret's family practice program. She returned to Pitt in 2003, in part to spearhead the Rite Care initiative.

"I think my favorite part about being a preceptor is being able to really understand what the students' goals are, and help them take their passion and apply it to pharmacy and patient care," she says.

Of her students in the Rite Care rotation, she adds, "I credit them with their willingness to try something new and different, and certainly they were successful. That's what makes precepting exciting, the students." ∞



Melissa Somma and Talia Kleeb at the awards presentation

Salvatore L. Gaetano Jr.

Distinguished Alumnus 2006

In an era where independent pharmacies are increasingly rare, Salvatore Gaetano (BS '59) is a throwback to the way things used to be.

Gaetano, the proprietor of Gaetano's Pharmacy in Bethel Park, Pa., knows the name, address, and personal story of everyone who walks in his store. He gives every patient his home telephone number, and when they are seriously ill, he goes to their homes. In addition to pharmaceuticals, Gaetano's provides ear piercing, passport photos, and notary services.

"This work is not work. This is the most exciting job that anyone could have. It's a gift to be working in a community pharmacy."

– Salvatore L. Gaetano Jr.

Yet ironically, Gaetano pursued pharmacy almost by accident. The son of parents whose formal education ended in the eighth grade, Gaetano describes himself as a reluctant student whose entrance exams nonetheless won him a spot at the University of Pittsburgh.

"I really didn't want to go to school. I didn't study very hard," he says. "I wanted music—I thought I would be the next Harry James or Benny Goodman."

His father, a strict disciplinarian, urged him to earn a college degree, knowing it would secure a better future for his son. The summer before his freshman year, Gaetano stopped in a corner drugstore to buy a cold drink, and that's when he knew what he wanted to study.

Although Gaetano was accepted into medical school following his graduation from the School of Pharmacy, he was drafted into the U.S. Air Force. When his stint was up, he decided to pursue pharmacy instead. He worked in hospital and military pharmacies but believes the community is his true calling.

"This work is not work," he says. "This is the most exciting job that anyone could have. It's a gift to be working in a community pharmacy."

He knows everybody's business: who's feuding, who's canoodling, who's expecting, who's grieving.

"You become part of their lives," he says. "I do it because I want to; I care."

Gaetano taught pharmacology at Waynesburg College for five years and served as a member of Pitt's Alumni Society Board for eight years. He was the chair of the School of Pharmacy's fundraising campaign in 1994. He is the founder of the School of Pharmacy's brick walkway, located at the entrance to Salk Hall. He also has coordinated donations from the companies formerly known as Squibb, Upjohn, and Parke-Davis for the school.

A past president of Kiwanis International, he also served as the director of that organization's Operation Drug Alert and has spoken to audiences around the country on the topic of drug abuse. He is an honorary member of the Rho Chi Society as well as a member of pharmacy associations in Pennsylvania, California, and Florida.

"I'm a very lucky person," Gaetano says. "Things just fell into place that I never thought would ever, ever happen." ∞



William Kennedy Sr.

Distinguished Alumnus 2006

As Bill Kennedy (BS '61) mixed his first batch of skin cream about 30 years ago, he knew he had a winner on his hands. Originally formulated to give dairy cows relief from chapping caused by calving and milking, Kennedy's Udderly Smooth Udder Cream quickly found a following among the farm families who tried it on their own skin.

Today, Kennedy is chief executive officer of Redex Industries Inc. in Salem, Ohio, which manufactures Udderly Smooth and a line of related skincare products. Three of his four children also work for the company.

A native of Youngstown, Ohio, Kennedy grew up in Sharon, Pa., and enrolled in the School of Pharmacy with an eye toward attending medical school. But he changed his mind and took a job working as a technical director for a farmer's cooperative.

"I saw that all the pre-med students were becoming biology teachers and anything but medical students," he says.

It was in his laboratory that he began working on the cream that would become his signature product, and he founded Redex in the mid-1970s.

"I knew that it was going to be a ballistic trip," Kennedy says.

In 2004, Kennedy won Ohio's Excellence in Exporting Award for providing his protective skin lotion to troops in Iraq, where his son, Brian, has served two tours of duty with the U.S. Marines.

Additionally, Kennedy funded the Salk Memorial display at the

"I'm a people person. I like to talk a lot, and I guess that's one of the things I miss about the drugstore—the day-to-day contact with people."

— William Kennedy Sr.

School of Pharmacy to honor Jonas Salk, with whom he brushed elbows during his student days.

"He sure led some earth-shaking events," Kennedy recalls. "To know a man of that stature—I'll tell you what, I wish I could say I knew him well."

In the future, Kennedy plans to add sunscreen to the existing products in the Udderly Smooth line, having heard feedback from customers who spend a lot of time in the sun. Although he is spending less time in the lab, he enjoys the hours he puts in.

"I'm a people person," he says. "I like to talk a lot, and I guess that's one of the things I miss about the drugstore—the day-to-day contact with people." ∞



Photographic Memories

Photography from the School of Pharmacy

On June 10, 2006, the Soldiers and Sailors National Military Museum and Memorial once again became home for the School of Pharmacy's annual gala. Through the Decades described the evening's theme, music, and décor. The evening was a great time for all including a wonderful meal, fantastic musical entertainment, dancing, awards, and a chance to catch up with old friends while making new ones.

Save the date for this year's gala, On the Red Carpet, which benefits the School of Pharmacy. The event, planned for May 12, 2007, will be held at the Circuit Center and Ballroom. Details can be found on the back cover of this magazine as well as by visiting our Web site, www.pharmacy.pitt.edu/gala.





Michael Mokotoff

Retiring Faculty

In the 36 years that Michael Mokotoff has taught at the School of Pharmacy, the scope and size of the school have changed as dramatically as the surrounding campus.

“I’ve always enjoyed working here, and I’ve always enjoyed my colleagues. You spend that many years here, you don’t stay if you don’t like the place.”

– Michael Mokotoff



Hired in 1968 as a member of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, Mokotoff specialized in peptide research as a followup to work he had started in a prior position with the National Institutes of Health. That research evolved into work on enzyme inhibitors for cancer chemotherapy, and later, amino acid research.

“The School of Pharmacy is entirely different—not necessarily in physical structure, but in the composition of faculty and the dramatic increase in the number of faculty at the school since ‘68,” he says. “When I came, I would say nearly everybody had a PhD and was in the basic sciences, for the most part. There was very little clinical science; there wasn’t such a thing as a PharmD program.”

Following a six-month sabbatical in 1978 at Israel’s Weizmann Institute of Science, where he served as a visiting scientist, Mokotoff returned to teach biochemistry and medicinal chemistry. He later coordinated a course in endocrinology and taught both peptide and steroid chemistry.

During his tenure, Mokotoff branched out to tackle many topics as the need arose due to changes in the school’s curriculum. He has taught selected lectures in areas ranging from oncology to psychiatry, cardiology, infectious diseases, drug metabolism, and immunology. For 26 years, he served as chair of the School of Pharmacy’s Academic Performance Committee, monitoring the progression and eventual graduation of students. In 1990, he was named by then-Governor Robert Casey to serve on the Pennsylvania Drug, Device, and Cosmetic Board, a post he held for eight years.

“Today’s students are more sophisticated than in years past, and more mature when they graduate because the program takes six years,” he says.

“The demand has been so high for pharmacists. We get many times more applications than we can take, so we have increased the standards for admission to the program,” he says. “As a result, we have gradually increased the scores we expect our students to earn prior to coming to the school.”

Of his decision to retire, Mokotoff says he has mixed feelings. After 38 years on the job, he is planning to pursue his many nonacademic interests, such as camping in national parks and state forests, for which he has already purchased a new pop-up trailer. He also enjoys woodworking and is hoping to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity.

But Mokotoff also expressed his share of regrets.

“To be a professor at a major university, just to walk around campus, you have some feeling of importance,” he says. “It’s hard to walk away from a great position. I’ve always enjoyed working here, and I’ve always enjoyed my colleagues. You spend that many years here, you don’t stay if you don’t like the place.” ∞

Phillip D. Pulsinelli

Retiring Faculty

When asked what he would miss most about teaching in the School of Pharmacy, Phillip Pulsinelli (BS '65, PhD '70) never hesitates: "The students, absolutely the students," he answers.

He has taught them all: undergraduate and graduate, pharmacy students, liberal arts majors, medical and dental students. But year after year, the budding pharmacists are his favorites.

"The field tends to attract a certain type of individual of high quality, high integrity," Pulsinelli says. "They take their studies very seriously. They're always very cooperative kids. They're just very

While at the School of Pharmacy, Pulsinelli coordinated courses and contributed lectures in all areas of biochemistry and selected areas of medicinal chemistry. He also helped to organize and present graduate courses in X-ray crystallography, diffraction physics, and biophysics, as well as a graduate tutorial course on the molecular biology of drug receptor interactions. The Class of 1982 named him the Hygeia Teacher of the Year.

Pulsinelli served on the School of Pharmacy's Academic Performance and Review Committee, as well as the University's Tenure Appeals Panel

Union of Crystallography, the American Institute of Physics, American Chemical Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Having dedicated more than three decades to teaching, Pulsinelli plans to resume a full-time pursuit of his research interests, including mathematical physics as it applies to particle spin dynamics. ∞

"[The students are] just very decent human beings, and it really makes you want to put a maximum effort forward in terms of teaching them, helping them, and guiding them."

– Phillip Pulsinelli

decent human beings, and it really makes you want to put a maximum effort forward in terms of teaching them, helping them, and guiding them. It's a tough program, but they go through it with minimal complaint, with maximum effort."

Pulsinelli began his research and teaching career at his alma mater, the University of Pittsburgh, in 1973. He served as an assistant professor of medicinal chemistry and an adjunct assistant professor of crystallography, continuing the hemoglobin studies he began while working with Nobel Prize winner Max Perutz at the Medical Research Council Laboratory for Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England. "The place crawls with Nobel Prize winners," he says.

and Academic Integrity Board. For four years, he was a member of the Pennsylvania Drug, Device, and Cosmetic Board and chaired, co-chaired, or taught at international colloquia, symposia, and workshops on protein crystallography, crystallographic computing, and the structure and function of hemoglobins.

At various times, he also has held memberships in the American Crystallographic Association, the International



Michael Romano

Retiring Faculty

As the director of pharmacy professional affairs for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), and as an assistant professor in the School of Pharmacy's Department of Pharmacy and Therapeutics, Michael Romano has played a key role in the clinical education of School of Pharmacy students for 35 years.

Romano's professional affiliation with the school began in 1973, when he ran its first clinical pharmacy program.

Today, students complete more intense, complex

rotations that specialize in more specific aspects of health care, in keeping with the more hands-on role that pharmacists are assuming throughout the profession.

"Back then, the clinical rotations weren't as intense and focused as they are today," he says.

He will remain affiliated with the pharmacy department at the Mediterranean Institute for

1993 and received the 1996 Faculty of the Year Award. The Pennsylvania Society of Health-System Pharmacists named him Pharmacist of the Year in 2003, and Romano received the Merck Sharpe & Dohme Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Profession of Pharmacy in 1990.

In 1999, Romano accepted a gubernatorial appointment to

"[Italy has] been a really great opportunity for me. It's a lot of work—it's not a vacation when you go over there."

— Michael Romano

Transplantation and Specialized Therapies, a UPMC partner located in Palermo, Italy. In that capacity, he travels to Italy four or five times each year to manage the pharmacy. The institute also sends staff members to Pittsburgh for training. "It's been a really great opportunity for me. It's a lot of work—it's not a vacation when you go over there."

It's a labor of love for Romano, whose grandparents immigrated to the United States from a small town outside Palermo. He still has family and friends in that region and hosts the Italians when they visit Pittsburgh.

"When you're Sicilian, you really bond with those people," he says. Romano also has served as the school's continuing education administrator since

the Pennsylvania State Board of Pharmacy, serving as its chair for two years, and was re-appointed to a second six-year term on the board in 2005. During his tenure, he was actively involved in the first changes to Pennsylvania's Pharmacy Act in more than 40 years, opening up more opportunities for pharmacists to take an active role in managing patients' drug therapies.

He plans to fulfill his current term, and he is pleased to be involved in the new era of pharmacy.

"This is a monumental change," he says. ∞



Our School

The School of Pharmacy named **Margie Snyder** (PharmD '06) as its inaugural community practice resident. The goal of this residency, offered in partnership with the Rite Aid Corporation, is to provide a structured, postgraduate training experience focused on the knowledge and skills needed to provide pharmaceutical care and develop medication therapy management practices for community-based patients.

The **Beta Kappa chapter of Kappa Psi** has received the Frank H. Eby Scholarship Tray, given to the chapter with the highest ranking grade point average among all chapters. There are 72 chapters nationwide. In addition, based on its leadership and service within the school and community, as well as scholarship, it has been ranked second nationally.

The **Alpha Omicron chapter of the Rho Chi Society** received the Project Proposal Award for its proposal to create two teaching awards for faculty.

The School of Pharmacy's 2006 pharmacy and therapeutics student team placed second in the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy Sixth Annual National Pharmacy and Therapeutics Competition, held during the annual meeting in Seattle, Wash. During the competition, student teams presented their analysis of a drug for formulary inclusion. Team members **Jennifer Stover** (PharmD '06), **Emily Dornblaser** (P4), **Stephanie Harriman** (P4), and **Nina Sonbolian** (P2) were recognized and awarded \$1,500 in scholarships.



In the 36 years she has worked at the University of Pittsburgh, Anna Stracci has worked for a host of departments, almost always in close contact with students.

As the registrar and academic advisor for the School of Pharmacy, it's Stracci who meets with all students individually after they enroll, who registers them and schedules their class time while they're at the school, and who ensures they stay on track with all curriculum requirements.

But she's also the person who offers unbridled enthusiasm for the school, its faculty, and the people it educates.

"I love the profession of pharmacy because of the opportunities it provides," she says. "I'm a people person, and if I had the science background, I would have pursued a degree in pharmacy. But my background is in education and business, so I live vicariously through our students."

Stracci arrived at the school in 1970 as a secretary, processing applications, maintaining student

files, and typing correspondence. She earned her bachelor's degree in business education in 1975 and moved on to other departments at Pitt, returning to the School of Pharmacy in 1988.

"Everything was just as I left it, which was really scary," she says with a laugh. Stracci's role expanded to include recruiting and admissions, and she is pleased by the school's transformation to its current prominence.

"We've come a long, long way," she says. "I'm proud of what we've accomplished in the school."

Occasionally, Stracci talks to alumni whose children are now attending Pitt, and they discover that she's still on the job. Her hope is that when she retires in 11 years, the School of Pharmacy will continue to enjoy its national reputation for its curriculum and faculty.

"I want everyone to know: We are the best," she says. ∞

SPOTLIGHT ON ANNA STRACCI

**"I want everyone to know: We are the best."
– Anna Stracci**

Our School

The School of Pharmacy once again partnered with the Graduate School of Public Health's Center for Minority Health (CMH) during the **Take a Health Professional to the People Day**. Teams of volunteer physicians, nurses, public health educators, dentists, pharmacists, and other health professionals traveled to local barbershops and beauty salons as part of this novel effort to provide potentially lifesaving information and health screenings and to build trust needed to create healthy African American families. The school and CMH encourage people to bring their medications with them to the barbershops and beauty salons so that the participating pharmacists can review the medications. In addition to helping people understand their medications, pharmacists provide advice on managing a variety of aspects of chronic conditions.



Tina Scipio with P1 students Kaitlyn Speer, Lauren Kancle, and Allison Govern at Take a Health Professional to the People Day 2006



Lindsay Palkovich, Julie Kent, and Renee McKenzie at their graduation ceremony, June 2006

Our School

New Associate Dean Leading the Charge for Excellence



As part of its strategic plan, the School of Pharmacy has set an important goal: to become a national leader in pharmacy education by 2011. And Susan Meyer is up to the challenge.

As the school's first-ever associate dean for education, Meyer is charged with leading that portion of the strategic plan not only by achieving the best practices in pharmacy education but also by evaluating its success through objective, quantifiable measures.

"The opportunities are really exciting," says Meyer, who arrived at Pitt this summer from the American Association of Colleges

of Pharmacy, where she had been a staff member since 1990. "I look forward to working with the school's faculty to develop innovative and effective teaching methods."

Meyer is part of a grassroots effort among faculty and administrators to create interprofessional educational opportunities across the University's health sciences. For example, one course inspired by suggestions from nurses in the Veterans Affairs medical system will help students in pharmacy, medicine, and nursing gain a better understanding of each other's contributions to patient care so they will communicate more effectively when they enter the workplace.

By creating a more collaborative approach to health care across many disciplines, Pitt joins other health science centers educating future healthcare practitioners to function in interprofessional teams to improve patient safety and quality of care.

"The opportunities for today's pharmacy students have never been greater," Meyer says. "The public is more aware than it ever

has been that medications are increasingly powerful and effective, but also increasingly dangerous and expensive. The pharmacist is the medication expert."

In addition to her role as an administrator, Meyer also is getting to know students in the classroom. Currently she is facilitating small discussion groups for first- and second-year students.

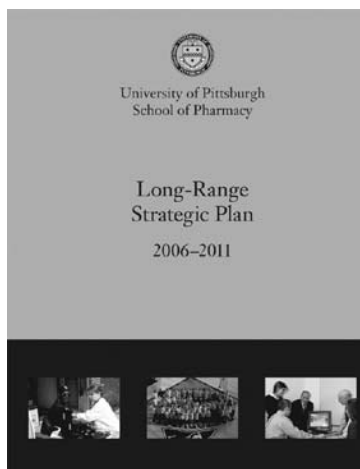
"I'm looking forward to working with students to consider how they can contribute to improved patient care and to promote health in the community," Meyer says.

She also hopes to tap into alumni expertise and opinions on ways to improve the education offered at the School of Pharmacy.

"Our alumni are practitioners out in the community and institutions, and we rely on them to serve as preceptors in the experiential component of the curriculum," she says. "One of our short-term goals is to enhance that component by interacting more with our preceptors. We will do more to help them in their role as educators and reach out to them for input on how we can improve our program." ∞

Charting the Course

In our 2004 accreditation review, the School of Pharmacy was described as "poised to become the leaders in pharmaceutical education," and the school is using two documents to turn that prediction into reality. Our strategic plan was first prepared in 2001, but over the past six months has been revised to set goals for 2006–11. This is a road map for our continued growth and rise in prominence. The annual report charts our progress over the past year in a detailed and descriptive way.



Available at www.pharmacy.pitt.edu/reports

Our Faculty

Degrees conferred by the University of Pittsburgh have a year following them.

Our new faculty members include **John D. Alvin** (BS '67), PhD, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences; **Alexander Dömling**, PhD, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences; **Ulrike L. Feske**, PhD, research assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences; **Tara L. Gesior**, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics; **Colleen Lauster**, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics; **Susan M. Meyer**, PhD, associate dean for education and professor of pharmacy and therapeutics; **Ty A. Ridenour**, PhD, research associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences; **Raphael Saenz**, PharmD, instructor of pharmacy and therapeutics; and **Xiang-Qun (Sean) Xie**, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

Kim Coley (BS '87), PharmD, associate professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, was invited to serve as a panelist for the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists Foundation Pharmacy Practice Research Award for 2006–07.

Robert Gibbs, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical sciences, received \$296,279 from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for a shared instrumentation grant. These funds will be used to purchase a Zeiss 620 Meta Confocal Microscope, which will be used by six NIH-funded investigators within the school. Most of the investigations fall within the realm of new drug development, particularly the development of anticancer agents and gene therapy methodologies.

Barry Gold, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, received a \$208,335 Keystone Innovation Starter Kit grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to establish a research base in which the study of membrane-associated proteins will be developed.

Haibiao Gong, PhD, was promoted from postdoctoral associate to research assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences; **Song Li**, MD, PhD, was promoted from assistant professor to associate professor with tenure of pharmaceutical science; and **Gordon Vanscoy** (BS '84), PharmD, MBA, was promoted from assistant dean of managed care to associate dean for business innovation.

Sandra Kane-Gill, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, received \$28,279 from the Society of Critical Care Medicine for "An Analysis of Risk Factors for Adverse Drug Events in Critically Ill Patients." Kane-Gill was elected as a member of the 2005–10 U.S. Pharmacopeia Therapeutic Decision-Making Expert Committee and was appointed chair of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy 2007 Publication Committee.

Edward Krenzelok, PharmD, professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, was named Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International. The award acknowledged his contributions that led to the development and support of poison centers and in Eastern Europe, Belarus, and Ukraine.

Yong Tae Kwon, PhD, assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, received two National Institutes of Health grants totaling over \$2 million for his projects "Proteomics of Ubiquitin-Dependent N-Rule Pathway" and "Role of Ubiquitin in Cardiovascular System." Kwon will study the protein degradation process and determine the physiological role of ATE1-dependent arginylation in the myocardial growth and gain insights into the cardiovascular pathways/molecules in which the ATE1-dependent proteolytic pathway participates.

Scott Mark, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, received the 2006 Josephine S. Failer Alumni Award from The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. The award recognizes an alumnus who has received a professional degree from the College of Pharmacy within the past 10 years and has made an outstanding contribution to community or professional service. Mark also was selected to receive the 2006 Rho Chi Alumni Award from Ferris State University, recognizing him for advancing the profession through intellectual leadership and the pursuit of excellence.

Brian Potoski (PharmD '99), assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, received \$15,500 from Pfizer for "Intravenous Voriconazole in Patients with Renal Compromise." The purpose of this study is to determine whether patients with compromised renal function receiving intravenous voriconazole experienced any adverse effects related to serum chemistries or other imaging studies of the kidney due to the accumulation of the vehicle cyclodextran.

Our Faculty

Rhonda Rea, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics, and colleagues received full funding (\$25,000) from the University's Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence for her proposal "Defining a Systematic Approach to Ill-Defined Problem Solving Using a Computer-Aided Learning Application in Problem-Based Learning." Rea's project plans to develop a combination problem-based learning and computer-assistant learning approach that will teach pharmacy students how to become independent learners and expert problem solvers in an effort to reduce drug-related death and illness.

Rea also received a clinical research feasibility grant from the University for her "Optimizing Aminoglycoside C_{max}/MIC to Improve Clinical Outcomes in ICU Patients with Gram-Negative Infections." She was appointed vice chair of the 2006 Education Committee for the Society of Critical Care Medicine's Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacology Section.

Senior Associate Dean **Randall Smith**, PhD, received the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association (PPA) Mortar and Pestle Award for his outstanding service to the pharmacy profession, including his work on the Rite Care project, a collaboration between Rite Aid and the School of Pharmacy to provide medication therapy management services to patients and for his active involvement in PPA.

Melissa Somma (PharmD '98), assistant professor of pharmacy and therapeutics and director of the Rite Aid/University of Pittsburgh Patient Care Initiative, was presented with the Distinguished Young Pharmacist Award by the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association during its annual meeting in August. Somma was chosen specifically for her work in developing patient-care practices in community-based pharmacies. Somma recently was invited to serve on the American Pharmacist Association and National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation Steering Committee for the national medication training management program. She also was appointed as a liaison to the Pharmacist Services Technical Advisory Coalition of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (PSTAC). The PSTAC works to improve the coding infrastructure necessary to support billing for pharmacists' professional services.

Margie Snyder (PharmD '06), community pharmacy practice resident, University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy/Rite Aid Corporation, has been appointed to the 2006–07 American Society of Health-System Pharmacists New Practitioners Forum Executive Committee and will be chairing the education advisory group.

James Tsikouris, PharmD, associate professor, received a clinical research feasibility grant from the University for his project, "Renin Angiotensin System Inhibitor Pharmacogenetics in Obstructive Sleep Apnea." The long-term goal of his study is to determine how genetics and renin angiotensin system inhibitors interact to influence obstructive sleep apnea and other cardiovascular-related diseases so as to improve the therapy.

Raman Venkataramanan, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical sciences, has been chosen as the vice chair of the Pharmacokinetics, Pharmacodynamics, and Drug Metabolism Section of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists for a one-year term beginning November 1, 2006. Venkataramanan became a member of the editorial board for the journal *Therapeutic Drug Monitoring*.



Our Students

P1—Class of 2010
 P2—Class of 2009
 P3—Class of 2008
 P4—Class of 2007



The School of Pharmacy welcomes to the PharmD program 108 incoming students who will graduate in 2010. The diverse class comes from seven states and 10 different undergraduate universities.

Marci Chew, graduate student, received the School of Pharmacy's Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Student Excellence Award. She also received a \$1,000 Wal-Mart scholarship to attend the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy annual meeting.

Jennifer Bonner, graduate student, was awarded a \$6,000 predoctoral graduate fellowship from the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education for her project, "Short and Long-term Effects of Small Bowel Transplantation on Drug Absorption and First-Pass Metabolism." She will perform these studies under the direction of Raman Venkataramanan. Bonner also received an American College of Clinical Pharmacology student trainee award for her student abstract, "Metabolic Functional Assessment in Living Donor Liver Transplant Patients."

Lauren Hynicka (P4) was selected to participate in the fifth annual Paul Ambrose Health Promotion Student Leadership Symposium. She was one of 41 clinical students chosen for the three-day symposium, which focused on developing leadership, advocacy, and coalition-building skills that help participants integrate prevention and public health strategies into their educational programs and their communities.

Yun Fan, graduate student researcher, received the 2006 American Association for Cancer Research-Chemistry in Cancer Research-National Foundation for Cancer Research Scholar in Training Award. Fan's advisor is Billy Day, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences.

PHARMACY ALUMNI SOCIETY BOARD 2006–07

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is truly an honor and a privilege to be the president of the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy Alumni Society this year. I am looking forward to many exciting opportunities for the alumni in the months ahead. As a student in the School of Pharmacy, I obtained an outstanding education while making unforgettable memories. I hope that each of you looks back at your time at the School of Pharmacy with sincere gratitude and fondness.

The School of Pharmacy continues to be one of the top schools in the country. This success is due to a combination of our talented students, excellent faculty, helpful staff, strong leadership, and successful alumni. Our alumni have been extremely generous with their professional talents as well as with their financial support. This financial support provides an endowment from which scholarships are provided to students in order to continue their studies at our school and at international sites. The alumni society, along with the students, would like to sincerely thank each of you for providing these opportunities. We are all working together to continue to advance the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy as well as the profession of pharmacy as a whole.

The School of Pharmacy Alumni Society has the most alumni engagement of any alumni society within the University of Pittsburgh. This is a tremendous honor to our school, and our generous alumni deserve considerable gratitude for this distinction. Our alumni society continues to



Amy Seybert, Alumni Society Board president

make a difference by sponsoring many events throughout the year, including homecoming weekend, alumni day, golf outing, senior dinner, alumni family day, continuing education programs, and career roundtable discussions. We look forward to your participation in these events.

I want to thank each member of the Alumni Society Board for their time, involvement, and dedication to the School of Pharmacy. Also, I would like to extend an invitation to each of you to become actively involved with the alumni society at this exciting time. By becoming a member of the alumni society, you will have the chance to interact closely with the School of Pharmacy students and other alumni. This experience has been extremely rewarding and enjoyable for me, and I know that you will feel the same way. There are many opportunities to get involved and make a difference. Please consider becoming a part of the alumni society and giving back to the School of Pharmacy. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events throughout the year! ∞

Our Alumni

In Memoriam

Lawrence Booth (BS '73)
Edward W. Edwards
(BS '56)

Mary Andritz (BS '73), School of Pharmacy distinguished alumnus, has assumed the position of dean, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Butler University. She had previously been dean at the Albany College of Pharmacy.

Marvin Barent (BS '53) after 45 years sold his pharmacy to a chain for nonpharmacy use; the store was formerly Kinley Drug.

Karen Habucky (BS '87, PhD '92), global regulatory leader, internal medicine, Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical Research and Development LLC,

has been elected as president of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists.

The Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association named **Salvatore Gaetano** (BS '59) pharmacist of the year. Gaetano has owned Gaetano's Pharmacy in Bethel Park, Pa., for 35 years, and prior to that he spent six years in the U.S. Air Force. He is recognized for his work in compounding and in establishing an immunization program. His award nomination states: "You have to see Sal at work to understand his abilities and type of pharmacy he operates."

Brighton Pharmacy has received the distinction of being honored as an outstanding community pharmacy by McKesson Corporation. The award, Northeast Regional Value-Rite Pharmacy of the Year, is given to a pharmacy that embraces advanced technology, patient care programs, and profitable business strategies while keeping its focus on the surrounding community. **Harry Davis** (BS '72) and **Tim Davis** (PharmD '00) lead a seasoned team, including Rachel Davis, **William Rowse** (BS '71), **J. Richard Helsing** (BS '76), and Lynnette Holsinger, who provide valued outcomes to their patients and customers.

Tell us what is happening! Contact us at www.pharmacy.pitt.edu/alumni.

Class of '40 alum recalls nearly a half-century of independent pharmacy



When **Maurice Mervis** (BS '40) was a student at the School of Pharmacy, money was tight. To stretch his small allowance, he rose at 5 each morning to take a train from his family's home in New Castle, Pa., to Pittsburgh, arriving at 7:30 a.m. and walking from the PL&E station to the school on the Boulevard of the Allies. At night, he did the same thing in reverse. During his senior year, Mervis teamed with a group of other commuting students to split cab fare on the way back to the train station, making his life somewhat easier.

So after four years of sacrifice, it's a good thing he loved his profession as much as he did. Mervis went on to spend nearly a half-century as an independent pharmacist in Beaver Falls, Pa., where his corner drugstore will celebrate its 104th birthday this year—with every indication that many more will follow.

For 48 of those years, the man

affectionately known as "Merv" was its proprietor. He offered a wide array of medications at reasonable prices; he tended the soda fountain, which is still in operation; and he got to know the people who walked through his door.

"That's how you build a reputation; that's how you get to know people," says Mervis, who retired in 2005.

So well known is Mervis around town that no matter where he goes, he runs into someone who recognizes him. He has treated generations of families, and they remember him fondly. "Everybody knows me. I run into people all over the place. And that's what is so meaningful to me," he says.

Mervis first became interested in pharmacy by watching his brother-in-law, who opened a drugstore in Weirton, W.Va. "It was an essential occupation, and I just took a liking to it," he says. "That's the only thing I ever considered.

It's a profession where you can help people and discuss their ills and do something for them to make them better."

After graduation, Mervis briefly worked for his brother-in-law and Sun Drug, then took a job with Hoffman's Professional Pharmacy in Beaver Falls. He bought the store in 1944, later changing its name to Mervis Professional Pharmacy. In October 2005, he sold it to a young pair of pharmacists who rechristened the store Beaver Falls Corner Drug.

Mervis is spending his retirement with his family, including his wife, Claire, a former piano teacher, and their three grown children. When asked what he misses most, his answer is simple, yet profound: the customers.

Although he now has time to read three newspapers a day and do whatever he pleases, the call of his life's work hasn't ceased: "I'm either going to get a job or buy another drugstore," he jokes. ∞

The Gary Haberle Scholarship Fund

PHILANTHROPY
FOR PHARMACY



Jerry Cochran, Randy Juhl, Patricia Kroboth, Gary Haberle, and Mark Nordenberg at the awards ceremony where Haberle was honored for 40 years of service

decided to establish the Gary Haberle Scholarship Fund. This endowment fund will provide assistance for a student who is enrolled in the PharmD program in any of the four years of the curriculum and who has financial need.

If you are one of the students that he was able to help and would like to make a contribution to the Gary Haberle Scholarship Fund, please call Lawton Snyder, director of development, at 412-624-3545.

The assistant dean for business and finance at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy is none other than Gary Haberle. Haberle has been with the School of Pharmacy since 1968. Currently, he is responsible for the financial health of the school, but for many years, Dean Patricia Kroboth as well as

previous deans of the school have sent many students who were struggling financially to Haberle, and he has been able to help them more times than anyone could have ever expected.

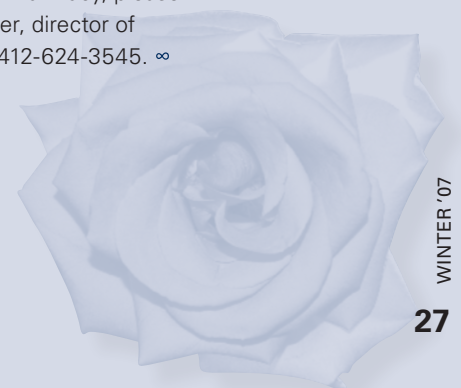
Because of the school's appreciation for what Haberle has been able to do for students, Kroboth and the School of Pharmacy

IRAs and Charitable Gifts

The new Pension Protection Act of 2006 will assist owners of individual retirement accounts (IRAs) in making charitable gifts. The long-awaited passage of this act is good news for qualified individuals. First, though, it is important to understand that the IRA charitable rollover provision applies only to outright lifetime transfers to qualified charities, not to future gifts, charitable gift annuities, or charitable trusts.

Also, the new rules will apply only to transfers made during 2006 and 2007. In brief, the new law provides an exclusion from gross income for otherwise taxable IRA distributions of up to \$100,000 per year from traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs for qualified charitable distributions, when the distribution is made directly to the designated charity by the plan. The plan owner must have attained at least age 70½ on the date of the distribution

to the charity. Note that a "qualified charitable deduction" specifically excludes distributions to donor-advised funds or supporting organizations. If you are interested in learning more about this new legislation or planned giving for the School of Pharmacy, please call Lawton Snyder, director of development, at 412-624-3545. ∞



The Vanscoy Endowed Chair

Longtime faculty member honors school with gift to create endowed chair



Gordon J. Vanscoy

For two decades, Gordon J. Vanscoy (BS '84), a nationally recognized clinician, has been creating business ventures and educating students at the School of Pharmacy. He has been a longtime benefactor of the University, supporting student scholarships and the school's White Coat Ceremony. Now he's looking to add a little something extra to his legacy.

Vanscoy, an associate professor of pharmacy and therapeutics and the school's associate dean of business innovation, with a gift of \$1.5 million, established the Dr. Gordon J. Vanscoy Endowed Chair. His hope is that the gift will support a renowned faculty member "who could influence not only our students, but also the school and the profession."

In addition to his teaching, research, administrative, and publishing responsibilities, Vanscoy is also the chairman and chief executive officer of University Pharmacotherapy Associates. The corporation, founded in 1989, has become the nation's largest provider of continuing education

and a major consultant to academic health plans.

As an alumnus of the School of Pharmacy and Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business (MBA '91), Vanscoy was motivated by his entrepreneurial success and dedication to Pitt in making his gift.

"The University gave me the opportunity and the platform to excel not only in my clinical practice, but also in terms of my business career," he says, adding that Pitt "was not only kind to me, but also gave me opportunities that I would not have had otherwise."

As a young faculty member and innovator at Pitt, Vanscoy created one of the country's first advanced anticoagulation services as well as the notable Drug Information and Pharmacoepidemiology Center at Pitt.

Vanscoy says when he was looking to delve into more entrepreneurial activities, then-Dean Randy Juhl encouraged him to pursue those goals. That decision proved to be not only benevolent, but also lucrative: He and his team's efforts in training clinical experts internationally in cardiovascular pharmacology and smoking cessation greatly expanded Pitt's reputation as a leader in education, and Vanscoy generated in excess of \$15 million in educational grants.

Today, his highly successful Monroeville, Pa.-based company educates health professionals across the country, provides training to interns and residents on rotation, and serves as a consultant to many top health plans, including the UPMC Health Plan—generating a kind of synergy that helps practitioners, students, and the school as well as the University.

Vanscoy will leave the recruitment decision as to which renowned faculty member is chosen to be honored as the

endowed chair to Dean Patricia Kroboth and the leadership of the school.

"I have entrusted the school and not prescribed [the gift] in such a detailed manner that would restrict bringing in a star. Metaphorically, I tried not to say 'we need a wide receiver' when there may be the opportunity to 'bring on a key linebacker' who would be able to accomplish my broader goal more quickly," Vanscoy says. "Advancing the profession of pharmacy through scholarship related to the practice of pharmacy or the education of students" is the intent of the gift.

Vanscoy believes that those blessed with success through hard work and opportunity have a responsibility to give back. In addition to continued support of the University, his future plans include launching several new business ventures in south Florida and providing board leadership to the regional chapter of the American Red Cross. ∞

Memorial Fund Additions

The School of Pharmacy In Memory Award was established by the school in 2005 to provide a deserving pharmacy student with an award in memory of all alumni, family, or friends whose memorial gifts have come to the School of Pharmacy. The first award will be given to a student this fall. Gifts have been made to this endowment in memory of **Samuel P. Conte** (BS '41), **Eilene Strauchler Liepack** (EDUC '57), and **Margaret Madarasz Gerson** (BS '52). We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this endowment in memory of their loved one.

Balancing Rivalries

Display showcases the indispensable tools of pharmacy

SNAPSHOT FROM
PHARMACY'S PAST



Marble top wood Troemner, all-glass torsion, all-metal torsion, steel-framed torsion, and Elmer Grimm Sr.'s wood-framed torsion

From the late 1800s to the 1960s, two prescription balance manufacturers competed head to head for the loyalty of pharmacists in search of one of the most indispensable tools of the profession.

The torsion balance was devised in 1882 and used a flattened gold wire stretched tight and fastened under a beam. (In later years, stretched steel

replaced the gold.) The Torsion Balance Co. manufactured the popular balances until 1969, when it was sold to Vertex Industries, then to Fulcrum Inc. in 2000. To this day, Fulcrum still manufactures torsion balances, and the Torbal-DX1 is the latest model.

The Elmer H. Grimm Sr. Pharmacy Museum on the fourth floor of Salk Hall is displaying three torsion balances of vari-

ous sizes that were among 480 items donated last year from the pharmacy of the late Gerard Leo Buehler (BS '48), by his widow, Margaret, and his son, Robert.

The museum also has two versions of the torsion's rival, the Troemner balance, which used two parallel beams of equal length, with knife edges made of hardened steel or agate. Plane surfaces in contact with the edges were made from the same materials. Torsions were thought to be more durable because knife edges could eventually become dull, museum curator Stanton Jonas notes.



New York's seal of approval on rear of a Troemner balance



Torsion balance's factory adjustment screws and grains/milligrams weight slide gauge

Although Troemner balances relied on a principle that was first applied in about 1660, they are virtually extinct today. According to Jonas, one of Torsion Balance Co.'s successors bought the Troemner for the sole purpose of putting the torsion's competition out of business. Of the two on display in Salk Hall, one was used by the museum's namesake, Elmer Grimm Sr., at the pharmacy he founded in Herminie, Pa., in 1933. ∞

Upcoming Events

Please join us for a few of our upcoming events:

March 17, 2007

Reception for Alumni and Friends
American Pharmacists Association
Annual Meeting
Atlanta, Ga.

March 20, 2007

University of Pittsburgh Schools of
the Health Sciences
Alumni Reception and Speakers
Raleigh-Durham, N.C.

March 23, 2007

51st Annual Koch Lecture
Kenneth N. Barker, PhD
"Research on Pharmacy Operations
and Medication Safety: A Lifetime
of Challenges and Fun"
Scaife Hall, Lecture Room 6
Pittsburgh, Pa.

April 29, 2007

Graduation Dinner
Sheraton Station Square
Pittsburgh, Pa.

May 12, 2007

Gala 2007
Circuit Center & Ballroom
Pittsburgh, Pa.



Dean Patricia Kroboth and Senior Associate Dean Randall Smith present National Minority Health Month Foundation Executive Director Gary Puckrein (left) with a plaque commemorating his participation on November 14, 2006, in the School's Distinguished Lecture Series.

May 15, 2007

Distinguished Lecture Series
Peter Tontonoz, MD, PhD
"Nuclear Receptors at the
Crossroads of Lipid Metabolism
and Inflammation"
'03 Hall, Salk Hall
Pittsburgh, Pa.

June 8, 2007

School of Pharmacy Golf
Invitational
Quicksilver Golf Club
Midway, Pa.

A full calendar of events can be found on the school's Web site:
www.pharmacy.pitt.edu/events



Distinguished Alumni Nomination Form

The School of Pharmacy Pharmacy Alumni Society invites you to nominate a fellow alumnus for the Distinguished Alumni Award. This award is presented annually to alumni based on outstanding professional achievements. All School of Pharmacy alumni are eligible and may nominate themselves or others. The nomination deadline is August 31.

Please send us information about your career advancements, papers presented, honors received, appointments, and further education. We'll include your news in the Alumni section as space allows. Photos are welcome. Please print clearly.

Please complete and return to:
 University of Pittsburgh
 School of Pharmacy
 Attention: Laraine Kuchma
 1104 Salk Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15261
 Phone: 412-648-3304 E-mail: kuchma@pitt.edu

Name: _____

Degree and Year of Graduation: _____

Home Telephone: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Home Address: _____

Business Address: _____

Business Telephone: _____

Position(s): _____

News: _____

Nominee's Name: _____

Graduation Year: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

Fax: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Your Name: _____

Graduation Year: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

Fax: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Reason for Nomination: _____

Please complete and return to:
 University of Pittsburgh, *PITPharmacy News*
 Attention: Laraine Kuchma
 1104 Salk Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15261
 Phone: 412-648-3304 E-mail: kuchma@pitt.edu

Gala 2007 On the Red Carpet

Join us on
May 12, 2007

Join your School of Pharmacy friends for an evening of great fun, music, and camaraderie.

Where: The Circuit Center & Ballroom on Hot Metal Street

Featuring: Gary Racan and the studio e band

Reservations: Laraine Kuchma at 412-648-3304 or kuchma@pitt.edu

Visit: www.pharmacy.pitt.edu/gala for more information



University of Pittsburgh

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