Dear Friends:

When we chose to pursue careers in pharmacy or the pharmaceutical sciences, I believe we did so because we were innately drawn to helping others. This is true of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

In this issue of Prescriptives you’ll read many wonderful stories about giving back. Alumnus Dr. Robert Singiser who, in the spirit of “pay it forward,” has provided sustaining funding for a graduate fellowship in pharmaceutics. Alumna Tracie Ezzio runs a family pharmacy in Maine and supports her local charities and community events. She tells us that she feels a “moral obligation” to give back to her patients and the community. Recent graduate, Eric Halpern, tells us of his alternative spring break which he spent volunteering in Israel. Faculty member Kevin Chamberlin volunteers to organize Drug Take Back Days.

I hear these types of stories about our alumni, faculty, and students on a daily basis. I’ve come to expect this as a quality of UConn pharmacy. What truly amazes me is the quiet dedication of the staff that works here in the school. Every member of our staff participates in some type of volunteer service outside their scope of employment. They work in their church, or for sports leagues, or charitable organizations. They help locally and internationally. It speaks to the quality of who we are as the UConn pharmacy family. This spirit of giving back is part of who we are and who we want to be. It’s part of the tradition of excellence here at UConn.

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Alumnus Endows Graduate Fellowship to Help Students Have the Opportunity He Was Given

By: Jacqueline Lomp

Fellowships benefit students who are motivated, self directed and demonstrate leadership with the potential for continued leadership. They give students an opportunity that, otherwise, might not be available.

Dr. Robert Singiser has been a long time donor to the School of Pharmacy and felt that this was the time to establish a fellowship. “It could easily be 25 or more years,” Dr. Singiser states. “I believe in supporting education and I also set up some scholarships at my old high school to support kids that are qualified but don’t have the means for higher education.”

Dr. Robert Singiser and his wife, Glenda, gave two gifts in 2010 to the School of Pharmacy’s Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences Program to endow the R.E. Singiser Memorial Fellowship fund for graduate students in pharmaceutics. A gift of over $325,000 was established from a charitable remainder trust that they closed early so that the school could have the funds for immediate use. A second gift of $400,000 is a life insurance policy that he and his wife took out to benefit the same fellowship at the School of Pharmacy.

Attending pharmacy school at Temple University, “I had a State Senatorial Scholarship that helped me through my undergraduate program,” said Dr. Singiser. After graduating from Temple he went to work at Merck & Co., Inc. in New Jersey from 1952-1955. He soon realized that he wanted to stay in industrial (R&D) pharmacy rather than go into retail or hospital pharmacy. With this goal in mind, he decided to continue his education. He obtained his master’s degree at the University of Florida and then transferred to UConn where he earned his Ph.D.

Dr. Singiser then worked at Abbott Laboratories (North Chicago, IL) for 35 years, rising to divisional vice president, scientific affairs, Pharmaceutical Products Division. “I very likely would not have gone back to school if I hadn’t been able to get an American Foundation for Pharmaceutics Education (AFPE) Fellowship,” he says. “Because of all the help that I received throughout my education, I want to give back and help other students have a chance to go to school like I did.”

Not only does Dr. Singiser donate to UConn, but he still supports AFPE annually with gifts, continually giving thanks and awarding other students with the same opportunities that he had.

Dr. Gerald Jackson, a very close friend and colleague, posthumously influenced him to give back to UConn. They went to undergraduate school, worked at Merck, and attended UConn together. The Gerald J. Jackson Memorial Fellowship in pharmaceutics is awarded to a deserving graduate student who holds an undergraduate degree in Pharmacy. Without the influence of Dr. Jackson, Dr. Singiser might not be as involved with UConn or giving back as much as he is today.

Contributors:

Prescriptives, the official newsletter for the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy and the UConn Pharmacy Alumni Association, is published semiannually. Please send comments, news and story ideas to: Elizabeth Anderson, Director of Marketing & Communications, at (860) 486-0847 or via e-mail: liz.anderson@uconn.edu.
For School of Pharmacy Staff Volunteerism is a Way of Life

By: Elmira Fifo

On October 29 through November 5 2011, Barbara Murawski embarked on an extremely meaningful trip to Haiti with the Great Commission Alliance. She, along with seventeen other participants from Pittsburgh, flew down to Mirebalais to volunteer and help the orphans of the area. For Murawski, a trip like this was something she has wanted to take for quite some time. Her parents were very philanthropic and she saw this trip as an opportunity to keep their memory alive and as recognition of how important philanthropy was to them.

Murawski has a personal interest in witnessing the suffering in Haiti, in part, because she too has suffered the loss of a child. Her son was killed in a car accident that made it very difficult for her to truly understand how life could continue. She describes that part of her life as one that was nearly impossible to overcome. Even so, she says, “I know this is something that will help other people and remind me that they are struggling too, that they struggle every day without ever seeing an end to it. This is something I can truly understand.” The trip was also a gift to herself; she was determined to go and the trip was finally brought to fruition.

Prior to leaving, Murawski felt anxious and “a little bit intimidated.” She worried about where she would fit in and what she could really accomplish. She added that seeing the orphans may be difficult to handle but she was confident that it would be an “amazing experience.” Upon her return, she confirmed that the trip was just that. “It was heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time,” she exulted. “I cried several times a day but I loved every minute.” Each person in the group was required to bring two suitcases of food and supplies. They had the privilege of staying in Mirebalais in air conditioned facilities, with hot and cold running water. Murawski pointed out how she felt “fortunate, but guilty, staying in a ‘palace’ in comparison to the locals” who lived in tiny tents and shacks. The volunteer work centered on different orphanages in Mirebalais and the surrounding area. The volunteers bathed the children, gave them full medical check-ups and physicals, provided shoes and clothes to wear, and played with and held them. “The kids just clung to you, they loved so much to just be held, and cuddled, and I just couldn’t get enough of them,” Murawski explained. She became so fond of one little girl, Miliatana, that she is now sponsoring her.

The group was fortunate enough to have members who spoke Creole and acted as translators, as well as the team coordinator for GCA, Frank Maiorana, who travels to Haiti every few weeks. He and his wife are a steady and welcome presence in Haiti. The GCA is currently building a school, a church, another orphanage, and a clinic with a pharmacy. Murawski extended extreme gratitude to the faculty and staff of the school of pharmacy who donated all the supplies to provide medical care to the children.

To Murawski, the different conditions of the orphanages made an indelible impression. The first orphanage they visited, Tou Tou’s, was run by an elderly woman, Madame Simone and her daughter, Caroline. These two women were responsible for twenty eight children, ages 1 to 13, who slept three to a bed. Their education was minimal, the responsibility and maintenance made the living conditions mediocre. Caroline also taught the children lessons, yet the scarcity of materials, the lack of labor and education made each day a struggle. In comparison, Seau d’eau’s orphanage was run by a minister and his family who were much more educated. Murawski stressed the value of education and explained, “It was great to have Seau d’eau’s orphanage as an example of what can be achieved. A place like Tou Tou’s breaks your heart because we did so much, and the next day, it seemed as if they were back at square one. There was never enough of anything because, how much can two relatively uneducated women do?”

She wondered at times how sad the reality was: GCA only had thirteen visiting teams last year, meaning only thirteen weeks out of the year were covered with supplies and help. She urges people to do what they can, and realize how much they have. “It is difficult now to come back to a world where my dinner table could feed that small town, and it can get me down thinking about how much there is to do,” she says sadly. Even so, she remains excited and thrilled to have had such an experience. “I plan to go again as soon as possible, and I will purchase a square foot of the orphanage for each of my children,” she asserts.
Study abroad programs are a popular option for college students looking to augment their resumes and broaden their academic experience. European destinations like Italy, France, and Spain continue to be popular but lately a growing number of students are expanding their horizons and heading off to more exotic destinations.

President Barack Obama specifically encouraged students to study in China and increase their sense of global community when he launched the 100,000 Strong Initiative highlighting educational and cultural ties between the U.S. and China in 2009.

Having recently returned from a study abroad program in China sponsored by the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, I can attest to the program’s benefits and encourage others to include travel abroad in their college experience. Diane Burgess, UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and recipient of the APSTJ Nagai International Woman Scientist Award, initiated the study abroad program four years ago as a joint collaboration between UConn and the Peking University School of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The goal of the program is to educate pharmacy students in the basics of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which includes acupuncture, acupressure and cupping.

Our TCM professors taught us that the basic theories of TCM are very different from Western medicine. While Western medicine focuses on curing disease, TCM focuses on maintaining a healthy balanced state within the body and therefore tends to emphasize prevention and prediction of disease states rather than treating a specific illness. TCM is also deeply rooted in philosophy and lifestyle rather than the medical care of western medicine. TCM practitioners believe that the body produces everything necessary to cure disease, therefore; a good and balanced life will eliminate the need for external medications.

Xiaoda Yang, a professor at the Peking University School of Pharmaceutical Sciences and winner of the National Science Foundation Award for Distinguished Young Scholars, and Dr. Xun Wang, assistant dean and course coordinator.

The difference in health philosophy between TCM and Western medicine extends into medical care as well. While a patient in the U.S. might have their blood pressure taken, the patient of a TCM practitioner would have their tongue examined and their pulse diagnosed. Pulse is more than just heart rate in TCM, where the strength and feel of the pulse are indicative of different disease states. Some other differences in health care became evident when we visited the Peking University Third Hospital, where we learned that there is no such thing as a referral in China. Patients choose which doctors they want to visit, and most visits cost about one U.S. dollar. There is also no such thing as an appointment, which led to impressive lines outside some of the clinics. Our tours of the Third Hospital included a visit to the TCM pharmacy, the pharmacy building and the TCM clinic, where doctors administer acupuncture, acupressure and cupping.

We learned a few fundamentals of herbal medicine, a daunting task as there are over 2,000 different herbs and more than 11,000 different prescriptions. We had a fantastic TCM lab with Dr. Yang, who taught us how to make medicinal rice wine, and took a trip to the Haituo Mountains to collect herbs. The most important characteristic of all TCM treatments is that all ingredients are found in nature. Processing the raw ingredients may cause simple chemical reactions, but there are no artificial components. We visited a company that is bringing traditional herbal medicines to the global market by identifying and distilling the active ingredients. Tasley Pharmaceuticals, located in Tianjin, specializes in large-scale manufacturing of TCM medicinal and herbal products.

We also found time to visit many of the historical sites in Beijing. Our class visited the Peking University main campus, the Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Museum of Science and attended a celebration of the 90th anniversary of communism in China. Despite our limited Mandarin language skills, we were able to bargain in markets and eat in restaurants, both of which were thoroughly satisfying experiences.

Our program was only able to touch on the broadest themes of TCM, but our professors and mentors inspired all of us to consider a more holistic approach to health care. We all gained an appreciation for the depth of knowledge and experience in TCM, as well as for the people and culture of China. Our program formally concluded with a few words from Associate Dean Zhao of the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Dr. Yang, who spoke about their wishes for the continued success of the program. We all share their hopes that this remarkable and unique opportunity remains available to future UConn students.
**Faculty & Staff News Briefs**

**Drs. Urs Boelsterli, Ted Rasmussen, and Winfried Krueger** have been awarded a $1.4 million 3 year grant from the Connecticut Stem Cell Research Program to investigate idiosyncratic drug-induced liver injury using stem cell approaches.

**Tom Buckley** has been selected to receive the Provost’s Award for Public Engagement in the Faculty Category. Tom has devoted a lifetime of service to his fellow person and the profession of pharmacy and deserves this accolade.

**Kevin Chamberlin** was nominated for an award in the New Faculty category.

**Dr. Bodhi Chaudhuri** was awarded the PhRMA Foundation Award at the Annual Meeting of AAPS in Washington, DC.

**Dr. Jill Fitzgerald** was elected CPE Section chair-elect for AACP.

**Dr. David Grant** has been appointed as the director of the UConn Biotechnology/Bioservices Center.

**Dr. José Manautou** has been elected chair of the 2013 Gordon Research Conference on Cellular & Molecular Mechanisms of Toxicity. He also has been elected by the University Senate to the Faculty Review Board. The board advises the provost on specific cases on promotion, tenure and reappointment.

**Dr. Robert McCarthy** was appointed vice provost for engagement. In this new leadership role, he will continue to coordinate the university’s engagement activities and establish set policies to promote best practices among the schools, colleges and regional campuses across the state.

**Dr. Stefanie Nigro** passed the BPS ambulatory care exam and is now a board certified ambulatory care pharmacist.

**Dr. Marie Smith and Alumna Marghie Giuliano** shared the 2011 Connecticut Business Group on Health Innovation Award for the Connecticut Pharmacists Network and CMS Medicaid Transformation Grant (MTM in a Medical Home Project.) Dr. Smith was also named the 2011 recipient of the ASHP Research and Education Foundation’s Award for Innovation in Pharmacy Practice. Her *Health Affairs* May 2010 paper “Why the Pharmacist Belongs in the Medical Home” received the 2011 ASHP Foundation Literature Award for Innovation in Pharmacy Practice at the 2011 ASHP Midyear meeting. She was invited to become a member of the Pharmacy Workforce Center Technical Advisory Panel that focuses on developing data on pharmacy workforce size, demographics, and related research and was appointed as a member of the Health Technology Workgroup, Governor’s Health Care Reform Cabinet.

**Community-Minded Staff Members**

Continued From Page 2

Sharon Giovenale, Librarian: American Cancer Society

Jenna Henderson, Assistant to the Associate Dean: Church Volunteer

Kathy Koji, Storekeeper: Special Olympics

Leslie LeBel, Graduate Program Coordinator: Breast Cancer Awareness and Lee National Denim Day Coordinator

Deborah Milvae, Business Manager: Boy Scouts of America

Mary Morytko, Field Coordinator: School Volunteer

Barbara Murawski, Administrative Assistant: Life Choice Donor Services and Great Commission Alliance

Joanne Nault, Continuing Education Coordinator: Guilford Civic Women, Soccer Fest Organizer, Sports Booster

Mary Ann Phaneuf, Assistant Director of Experiential Education: Woodstock Academy Music Association

Meg Tartsinis, Assistant to the Dean: Cub Scouts of America and Colchester Wrestling

Peter Tyczkowski, Educational Outreach Coordinator: Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps, Connecticut Pharmacists Association, and St. Paul’s Men’s Club

Innovation

Continued from Back Cover

Dr. Anderson, who was the award winner in the category of Research Innovation and Leadership, was recognized for her work in innovative drug treatment for infectious diseases and drug resistance with a focus on combatting the bacterial infection Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, which is resistant to most antibiotic treatment. Anderson’s approach targets the metabolic function of one of the bacteria’s essential proteins. Anderson’s award does not surprise Paulsen either. “[Amy] is a very good mentor. She is not only very knowledgeable of the work that we are doing, but she also cares about mentoring you,” Paulsen says. “She guides you from the point of an incoming graduate student to post-doctoral study.”

Developing new drugs can be an arduous and extremely challenging process, but Paulsen says she is not one to get easily discouraged. “I think when you love doing something it is easier to keep motivated,” she says. “You have to keep in mind that what you are doing has the
Senator Blumenthal Discusses Drug-Resistant Infections at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

By: James Morganti

Over the last decade, an alarming rise in drug-resistant infections has struck health centers nationwide. New strains of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), E.coli, and Pseudomonas, among others, are evolving to match even the most powerful of antibiotics, an effect many experts attribute to liberal trends in broad-spectrum antibiotic use and the introduction of exotic strains from soldiers stationed overseas. In the absence of proper treatment, mortality rates have hiked as high as fifty percent, and with children, senior citizens, and members of the armed forces at highest risk for infection, new antibiotics are in utmost demand.

Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) met with local medical officials at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center to discuss these antibiotics and the threat resistant infections pose in pediatrics. Dr. Jennifer Girotto, assistant professor of pharmacy practice and pediatrics at UConn and co-director of the antimicrobial stewardship program at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, was among the experts invited to attend the roundtable discussion. “At this point, we’re dealing with infections such that we have had to turn to drugs we’ve avoided for years due to toxicity,” says Girotto. “There is a distinct possibility that we will come across a pathogen that is resistant to all the currently available antibiotics.”

Unlike with a maintenance medication for blood pressure or asthma that a patient may take daily for years, when a new antibiotic is approved by the FDA, hospitals seek to restrict its use to the neediest patients for a constricted time in an effort to limit the development of resistance. Unfortunately, these treatments are not as profitable for pharmaceutical companies, and a general movement away from studying antibiotics has accounted for the lack of effective drugs in the pipeline. “The new antibiotic picture is even more concerning to the pediatric population because when new drugs do make it to the market, it is often years until we have any good data in children,” says Girotto. While the Pediatric Research Equity Act of 2004 grants the FDA the right to mandate new pediatric studies by manufacturers, medications are often studied in adult populations before any testing in children is conducted. Girotto cites that there has been only one adolescent dosing study of the antibiotic ceftaroline after it gained approval for adults in November 2010, and that the initial estimations of the dose in that population were incorrect. Additional studies on the drug are now being conducted, but it will be years before the results are released, says Girotto.

Furthermore, the majority of pediatric studies conducted focus on children two years and older, leaving the neonatal population, or children under two, to go virtually unstudied. “These newborns, especially those born prematurely, are by nature of their prematurity immunocompromised,” says Girotto, “and new data is critical for them to receive antibiotics. But it is that vulnerability that also fuels drug companies’ reluctance to fund clinical studies.” The issue is further complicated by the fact that the small doses needed in neonatal treatments make studies unprofitable, and so there is no economic incentive for the manufacturers to focus on these very young patients.

In October, Blumenthal and Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) introduced the Generating Antibiotics Incentives Now (GAIN) Act into the Senate as the second piece of legislation will help stimulate interest in creating new antibiotics, she also stresses that it is only one part of the solution, and will continue working with other specialists at Connecticut Children’s on their antimicrobial stewardship to improve and evaluate pharmacotherapy for children with infectious diseases. Following specific guidelines released by the Infectious Disease Society of America and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, antimicrobial programs have proven successful across the country in optimizing patient care, minimizing antibiotic resistance, and decreasing adverse side effects of treatments.

Over the past few years, Girotto and her team have worked to push the current standard of care. “It is important to make sure that patients are receiving appropriate medications at optimal dosing, and to review cultures,” she says, “especially in a day when highly resistant pathogens, including extended-spectrum beta-lactamase producing E. coli or Klebsiella are even seen locally.” In an effort to protect the remaining effective antibiotics from resistance through proper use, Girotto and various specialists from the hospital have helped to create standards for broad-spectrum antibiotics including cefepime and meropenem and worked on approaches to infections including febrile neutropenia, sepsis and catheter related bloodstream infections. As the program progresses, Girotto expects to evaluate the improvements and disseminate their findings to build upon the limited pediatric specific stewardship literature.

Read the article, “Antibiotic Development Requires Broad Support,” co-authored by Drs. Amy and Anderson and Jennifer Girotto, that appeared in the December 13, 2011 issue of The Hartford Courant. The link is available in the news archives on the School of Pharmacy website.
Medication Disposal Program Leads to “Take Back” Movement in Connecticut

By: James Morganti

Without standardized state and national guidelines for proper drug disposal, it can be tempting to fall back on the old ways of getting rid of extra or expired prescriptions. “While some medications can be poured down the sink or flushed down the toilet, others cannot. Disposal without discrimination can poison the water you drink and endanger the local wildlife around you,” warns Dr. Kevin Chamberlin, who helps run the Medication Disposal Program (MDP) in Southington with UConn Health Center pharmacist John Dobbins, R.Ph.

Throwing out medications in their original labeled bottles or leaving them unattended in medicine cabinets can open the door for theft or misuse, as seen in the alarming spike in recent years of prescription drug abuse among young adults. “We established the MDP in an effort to raise awareness about these pressing concerns and offer practical, convenient solutions for local communities,” says Chamberlin.

Since 2009, Chamberlin and Dobbins have devoted their time, expertise and equipment to keeping the streets and waterways of Southington and Bristol clean by offering members of the local community a safe and easy way to dispose of prescription drugs with their annual take back days at the Southington Water Department, where Dobbins acted as commissioner before running for town council. This October, the two decided to hold their second event of the year at the UConn Health Center in Farmington as one of several community groups across the state taking part in the Drug Enforcement Administration’s third sponsored National Prescription Take-Back Day.

A volunteer staff of 40 congregated outside the center’s Medical Arts and Research Building to collect unwanted and expired prescription medication from members of the local community for proper incineration by approved vendors. In the span of six hours, over 100 cars had dropped off 279 prescriptions of controlled substances, including 5,700 capsules, tablets or patches; 3.75 liters of liquid narcotics; 9.5 pounds of inhalers; and 224 pounds of other medications, enough to fill three 55-gallon drums. Chamberlin was proud to see the volume of returned prescriptions triple since the first MDP event in 2009, and the number of UConn pharmacy students volunteers double, and that new volunteers from the nursing school also signed on to help.

In addition to laying the framework for similar progressive programs around the state, Chamberlin and Dobbins have recognized the MDP as a source of valuable data for research. Statistics, insights and analyses from questionnaires distributed during the 2009 MDP that explored local citizens’ reasons for attendance and their typical methods of medication disposal were presented by Southington Water Department Superintendent Tom West at a large, regional, Water Department meeting in Vermont. Meanwhile, on the homefront, Chamberlin shared planning guides and resource lists from the event with local organizations, including the State of Connecticut Drug Control Division, in an effort to help standardize procedure within Connecticut.

Following the October 2011 event, Chamberlin and Dobbins began trending data with information from the three annual MDPs held in Southington, looking closely at changing patterns in community members’ deposits and the sources of their unwanted prescriptions, and noticed a significant drop in Oxycodone, which was recently reformulated to be more resistant to crushing for snorting or injection. “It seems that the reformulation made it less ‘wanted’ on the streets or for abuse usage,” he said, adding that it appeared oxymorphone had taken the role of preferred opiate for unintended use. Coming research may explore the relative success of the Farmington and Southington MDPs in respect to their locations in town for insight into how human geography plays a part in a successful return day, says Chamberlin.

Given the considerable success of the MDP over the years, Chamberlin hopes to further broaden the MDP’s horizons and begin collaborating with other community groups on larger efforts in coming years, first by comparing amounts of returned non-controlled drugs that are particularly harmful to the environment, including antibiotics, immunosuppressants, hormones, and anticoagulants. “We have data collected,” Chamberlin shares, “but the time and manpower we need to identify and quantify the sheer volume of pharmaceuticals we receive each event hasn’t yet caught up.” While the Southington MDP is still one of few disposal programs that takes part outside of the DEA’s sponsored days, the “take back” movement continues to build across the country toward a safer future.
It is often said that the older we get the more we reminisce about the past. I have to admit I find myself doing this more and more often. I also find myself wondering if any of the connections I’ve made within the pharmacy community over the years will have any impact on the practice of pharmacy or, on a more global level, patient care in general. Based on the communications I get from former students and colleagues from around the county I can safely say the practice of pharmacy is evolving nicely and I may have had some small impact on its evolution.

The questions we should all be asking ourselves are: “How much of an impact are we having on pharmacy? Do our connections with colleagues, students, patients and everyone else really matter?” I think they do; its human nature to develop connections with individuals with whom we have something in common. We connect with family, friends with similar interests, neighbors, and the like, but I have always felt the pharmacy-related connections we have with coworkers, colleagues, classmates, alumni, and future alumni were the most important if I wanted to make a difference in pharmacy practice.

The funny thing is even non-pharmacy connections can have an impact on pharmacy practice. In my case, family connections and pharmacy are intertwined. My wife is a pharmacist and a diabetes educator like me, and our focus has always been on patient care. One might assume that our daughter, growing up in such a pharmacy and diabetes focused household, would follow in her parent’s footsteps and go into pharmacy or diabetes in some way. This was not to be. She made it very clear when she was in high school and thinking about college that she wanted nothing to do with drugs or diabetes. What does this have to do with connecting and impacting pharmacy? Well she’s out of college now well into her career of choice as a physician. The difference is she has on more than one occasion expressed great respect and gratitude for the pharmacists with whom she works. The point is, “don’t assume your individual connections with non-pharmacy individuals can’t impact pharmacy practice.” Every time you offer advice you’re impacting pharmacy by representing the profession through the provision of personalized professional advice. The kind of advice you can’t get from Wikipedia or social apps.

For those of you cyber-savvy pharmacists, my hat is off to you for taking connecting, and staying connected, to a whole new level. I wonder, is it making a difference in the profession of pharmacy? Some aspects of cyber connecting are wonderful, like keeping in touch with old friends and classmates and other alumni and plans are in the works to make connecting with UConn pharmacy alumni easier. Some aspects of cyber-connecting, however, may not be a direction we might want to go. It seems we are moving away from face-to-face interactions and making connecting less personal. This virtual connectivity via social and professional networks may allow for instant access to the individuals we have connections with but what will the impact on our profession and on patient care be if everyone gets their information and recommendations on drug therapy from the internet? Worse yet, do you want your patients following advice based entirely on what their friends would do as one social media app promotes? As pharmacists we need to continue to promote ourselves as key members of the health care team by staying connected and involved with each other and the practice of pharmacy, providing the same message through direct contact with individuals. We also need to form new, personal connections with other members of the health care team. In this way we support and promote not only ourselves but our profession and future generations of pharmacists.
Since becoming the director of alumni relations and executive secretary of the UConn Pharmacy Alumni Association last May, I’ve had the opportunity to meet so many of you and to communicate with even more by phone or e-mail. It’s been my pleasure to make your acquaintance and I have enjoyed hearing the recollections of your years in the School of Pharmacy and on the Storrs campus. You have many stories to tell!

We’ve just celebrated Alumni Weekend, and it was wonderful to meet members of the Class of 1962 and our Distinguished Alumni Award recipients. Two common themes emerged from the conversations over the weekend; UConn School of Pharmacy alumni feel that they were well prepared for their professional careers, and our alumni have followed many different paths since graduation. In fact, some created their own paths - here in Connecticut, across the country, and around the world. In pharmacy practice, industry and academia, you are the embodiment of this statement from the School of Pharmacy website - A Tradition of Excellence: Preparing Leaders in Pharmacy and the Pharmaceutical Sciences Since 1925.

It strikes me that so many of you consider your time at UConn and the School of Pharmacy to be an integral part of your identity. An amazing number of our alumni have one or two of the following words as part of their e-mail address: Rx, UConn, Husky, RPh, pharm, PharmD, pharmacy, pharmacist. Quite often, you have combined one of those words with your graduation year and/or a part of your name. For our more recent alumni, this may seem a natural choice for an e-mail address.

On the other hand, most of us never had an e-mail address until years after graduation. The fact that so many of you thought to include an aspect of your UConn experience in your e-mail identity is impressive. I think it speaks to the strong connection we enjoy with the school, our classmates, and the university.

On a related thought, we recently created a group on LinkedIn specifically for pharmacy alumni. With this group we hope to foster relationships and collaborations among UConn School of Pharmacy alumni, faculty, researchers, staff, and students. If you have a LinkedIn profile, please search for “University of Connecticut Pharmacy Alumni Association” and join the group. (Please note that there any many UConn alumni groups on LinkedIn, so including the word pharmacy in your search will help to easily find us.)

The Pharmacy Alumni Office will be closed for the summer, but I will be available if anyone plans to visit Storrs and would like to see the School of Pharmacy. Please e-mail me several days in advance to check my schedule before your visit.

In the coming academic year, we are planning to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the graduate degree programs at the School of Pharmacy. M.S. and Ph.D. alumni will be hearing from me as the arrangements are completed. Our graduate students always enjoy the opportunity to interact with our alumni, and we’re hoping to have an opportunity to further those connections as well.

In closing, please continue to contact me to share your thoughts. I welcome the opportunity to hear of your professional endeavors and what UConn means to you. I can be reached at mary.ann.dolan@uconn.edu. Have a wonderful summer!

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our alumni and friends.

Merrill R. Allen ’59
October 19, 2011

Theodore R. Bates, Ph.D. (former faculty)
January 13, 2011

Cosmo W. DePalma ’44
December 24, 2011

Robert J. Gerraughty ’59 Ph.D.
February 3, 2012

Sanford Glassman ’48, ’62 J.D.
March 18, 2011

Everett A. Goldberg ’66
November 7, 2011

Arthur C. Hansen, Jr. ’59
March 22, 2012

Barbara Levine Hershey ’50
April 23, 2012

Gilbert J. Hite, Ph.D. [emeritus professor]
June 4, 2012

Richard J. Kochis ’57
February 8, 2011

Jacob A. Kraut ’40
March 28, 2011

Rita McGuire ’52
November 9, 2011

Ronald J. Moleski ’69
February 5, 2012

Alcide G. Nadeau ’61
January 25, 2011

Lawrence Jay Sobel ’61
May 20, 2012

James S. Tubiak ’63
February 22, 2012

Audrey A. Whitbeck ’58
March 13, 2012

Sherman Zimmerman ’50
February 14, 2012
Leona (Leigh) Rapaport Levitt ‘55 reports that she continues to teach Human Anatomy and Physiology at Union County College in Cranford, NJ.

Doris Denney ‘62 traveled the furthest for the Pharmacy Reunion dinner and Alumni Weekend. Doris lives in Idaho, and was a pharmacist with Terry Reilly Health Services Clinics in Nampa, ID from 1973 – 1999. While there, she provided an intern and residency site for students from Idaho State University. Doris reports that during the early years, practitioners from the clinic made trips to the migrant camps providing services similar to those offered at the UConn Migrant Farm Worker Health Clinics staffed by our faculty, students and alumni.

Elliott Tertes ‘62, FASCP, was named Trustee of the Year at Hebrew Health Care at their annual meeting in October 2011, and continues to serve as a director for the UConn Pharmacy Alumni Association.

Robert Krueger, UConn BS Pharm ’71, Ulowa PhD ’75 recently retired from his position of professor of pharmacognosy, College of Pharmacy, Ferris State University after almost 37 years, and has assumed emeritus status. Bob was recognized as a Michigan Association of Governing Boards Distinguished Faculty Awardee in 1988, was named the recipient of the Ferris State University Academic Distinguished Service Award in 2009. In 2011, he was named an Honorary Member in the American Society of Pharmacognosy. Bob will continue to serve as that society’s foundation treasurer, president of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, and in other local governmental, statewide, and national capacities. He is also continuing to work with FSU on some projects related to emeritus faculty.

Connecticut Pharmacists Foundation president, Cynthia Huge ’75, hosted the 2nd annual wine-tasting reception to benefit the Scholarship Fund. This year’s event was held at Chamard Vineyard, Clinton, CT.

Richard T. Carbray, Jr. ’75 and Richard Roth were honored by the Hamden Chamber of Commerce when their business, Apex Pharmacy, Home Care and Nutritional Center, was selected in November 2011 as the business of the year. Rick Carbray is a past president of the UConn Pharmacy Alumni Association and is currently serving as a trustee of the University of Connecticut.

Jeffrey Bourret ’79, MS, FASHP gave a Lunch & Learn presentation at the School of Pharmacy in April. Jeff is senior director, Specialty Customer Adherence Initiatives, Pfizer Specialty Care Business Unit of Pfizer, Inc. Jeff spoke about his career path from hospital pharmacy to hospital administration, and then pharmaceutical industry. His presentation, “Pharmacist Opportunities in the Pharmaceutical & Biotechnology Industries,” garnered much interest from the pharmacy student audience.

Christopher Fortier ’03 is currently manager pharmacy support & OR services, and adjunct assistant professor, Medical University of South Carolina. He was featured in the April 2011 Pharmacy Today Health-System Edition, for his efforts to advance the role of pharmacists and technicians in specialty areas at MUSC. Christopher was also selected to give a presentation entitled “Safe, Effective and Efficient Medication Distribution: Challenging Paradigms and Bedrocks” at the ASHP/ASHP Foundation’s Pharmacy Practice Model Summit held in November 2011 in Dallas. In addition, he was invited to represent South Carolina as a voting member for the summit.

APhA-ASP Student Travel Support

Many thanks to the following alumni & faculty members for their support of students who traveled to the 2012 APhA convention in New Orleans, LA.

Austin Bebyn ’86
Andrew Bzowyckyj ’09
John A. Capuano ’73
David J. Cooper ’75
Robert L. Dana ’63
Angelo DeFazio ’85
Mary Ann Dolan ’86
Christopher R. Fortier ’03
Gerald Gianutsos
V. Michael Guertin ’66
Cynthia E. Huge ’75
Ellen Jennings ’88
George F. Kirkpatrick, Jr. ’71
Joseph & Patricia Krzanowski ’62
Daniel C. Leone ’53
José E. Manautou
Michael T. ’94 & Maria Moore ’06
Jacqueline M. Murphy ’78
Shankar Musunuri ’93
Karl A. Nieforth ’82 (Hon)
Nuron Biotech
Edward Schreiner, Jr. ’82
Mukhtar Shihabeddin ’82 ’84
Edward N. Silver ’49
David Zeng ’97

Innovation

Continued from Page 5

potential to affect a lot of people if it is successful, and that is kind of cool.”

Paulsen was nominated for the award by Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor Debra Kendall, head of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. “Janet is an extraordinary role model and graduate student who excels at computational and experimental work,” says Kendall. “She has built upon the skills obtained in her Ph.D. research and has creatively applied these as a Merck intern to the devastating health problems associated with HIV infection and AIDS world-wide. From my perspective as a teacher-scholar, this progression of learning as a student and then giving to the community-at-large through one’s scholarly pursuits is a triumph for us all.”
For Tracie Ezzio, a strong sense of moral obligation to her local community is second nature. Growing up in the small coastal town of Freeport, Maine, she began working at her grandfather's pharmacy when she was in the sixth grade. It was here that she learned firsthand the measure of time and effort a pharmacist puts into getting to know patients' specific needs, as well as the fundamental sense of frugality on which she depends today. Back then, Ezzio remembers, it was standard for pharmacies to offer services like home delivery for their customers.

At Pepperell Family Pharmacy, an independent pharmacy Ezzio owns and runs in northern Massachusetts, she is proud to provide delivery, compounding and medication refill reminders free of charge. “This is just how we operate,” she puts it modestly.

It doesn’t stop there. In a snowstorm that left much of New England powerless for days, the pharmacy continued to serve its customers, even making a delivery for a patient at a school in a neighboring town. For the elderly community, this quality of personal care is of the uttermost importance. Geriatric care, in fact, is the pharmacy’s specialty, Ezzio asserts, reflecting that a deep respect and admiration for elder residents is central to the pharmacy’s philosophy. The personal and philanthropic attitude of the staff “makes a huge difference in keeping older patients in their homes.”

Self-described as “one of those lucky people who knew what she wanted to do all her life,” Ezzio was drawn to the pharmacy program at the University of Connecticut to start her career. On campus, she learned the practical side of pharmacy from the legendary Henry “Hank” Palmer, former professor and associate dean in the School of Pharmacy, and worked with a dozen other pharmacy students in UConn’s infirmary pharmacy under Joe Racicot, who, she recognizes, “really helped us get through school.” Off campus, she held internships in nearby Willimantic, and a rotation at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Looking back, Ezzio feels “so deeply appreciative of the education [she] received” through UConn, and still keeps her ties with the school. Dean Robert McCarthy, whose daughter attended high school with Ezzio’s own daughter, has even stopped in to visit the pharmacy.

After graduating cum laude, Ezzio moved to the Pepperell area to work as a pharmacist at the local McNabb Pharmacy. When the McNabb store in Pepperell closed twenty years later, she was strongly encouraged to open her own business. “The local doctors were saying, ‘Open! Open! Open! Open now!’ There were articles in the newspaper. That was a big push for me to finally do it,” recalls Ezzio. “The encouragement and the support of the town has been absolutely phenomenal.” Ezzio chose to base her store in the old train depot on Main Street, adding a sense of heritage and appreciation of history that strikes “even someone new in town.”

Over the years, Ezzio and her crew have shown their deep appreciation for the town’s support by giving back with local charity events, non-profit organizations, student run activities, local church events and fundraisers, and outreach foundations. The pharmacy also held an “Appreciation Day” outside the store in honor of her supporters, complete with pony rides and ice cream. “We have to stop and say, ‘thank you. We appreciate what you’ve done.’” says Ezzio. “It meant so much to people.”

As Ezzio and her staff work today with patients to compound medications in order to suit their individual needs and offer “brown bag days” to clients for comprehensive medication reviews, Pepperell Pharmacy continues to expand. Since 2009, the pharmacy has doubled its store space and taken on two registered pharmacists, one of whom is Ezzio’s daughter, Larissa, making Pepperell a true family pharmacy. Just this year, they extended its regular hours to run seven days a week in order to meet public demand. Everyday, Ezzio sees that small town values are still appreciated in today’s busy world, and encourages others thinking about opening their own independent pharmacies to take a chance on entrepreneurship. “It’s the best thing I ever did,” she says. “That’s what life is about, and that’s what really makes what we do worthwhile at the end of the day: the things we do for other people.”
By: Jacquelyn Lomp

Student is to examination as athlete is to game time. Athletics and academics are similar in that athletes practice to prepare for a game and students study to prepare for examinations. Student athletes not only have to excel in athletics but also have to maintain schoolwork and grades to stay eligible to participate which can be particularly stressful for those students who are on scholarship. The University of Connecticut’s School of Pharmacy houses many student-athletes, helping each one learn the keys to managing time, schoolwork, extra curricular activities, and sports.

Most athletes wish that there were more hours in the day. “I literally had to write out a schedule detailing every minute of my day,” Taylor Hoige, a former varsity rower, described. “Time management was key. If I never learned time management, I would have never made it into the School of Pharmacy and I would not have survived rowing and school everyday.”

Past and present student athletes go through similar experiences with balancing schoolwork and practices and games. Travel time results in missed classes and exams. Luckily, professors in the School of Pharmacy are accommodating and flexible in working with the student athletes. “I was very fortunate because many of my professors allowed me to make up exams either before or after everyone else in the class had,” said Jody Sydor, a former student athlete on a hockey scholarship. “I learned to balance school and sports because it was necessary for my survival.” Athletes learn to find time to do work while away from campus as well. Gretchen Stern, a former varsity rower, found time for her studies while on the road. “Usually we would travel on the coach bus for up to nine hours sometimes. I would use this time to either study or rest,” Stern stated. “I would also do homework and study at the hotels, and then when it came to race-day, I would focus entirely on that.”

Rowers Taylor Hoige and Gretchen Stern with Hockey Captain Jody Sydor and former student athlete and current School of Pharmacy Advisory Board Vice Chairman Mark Brackett.

Rachel Babineau, is a current varsity cheerleader and pharmacy student. Being a student athlete, she says, opens up a whole new world: “On top of studying for exams, going to class and getting through assignments, a student athlete must also attend team practices, games and volunteer events.” Being an athlete taught Babineau to manage and organize her time wisely during her first professional year.

As a practice player for the UConn Women’s Basketball team, Preston Noon is considered a student athlete and is obliged to follow all of the same restrictions as the women do such as, academic GPA cutoffs and drug testing. Though Noon is in his 5th year at the School of Pharmacy he is in between the P2 and P3 years because of his active pursuit for a dual Pharm.D./MBA degree. “The time commitments are very hard,” Noon said. “I learned to make a calendar and prioritize all of my assignments.”

While all student-athletes can agree that the commitment is hard at times, there are few regrets along the way when the four years of eligibility are up. “I loved being a student athlete, and would do it again in a heartbeat,” Sydor admits. The rewarding experience leaves athletes with skills and friendships that would have never been created otherwise. “My team was my family away from home; those girls always had my back and were there for me,” Hoige describes. “I learned the importance of time management, punctuality, honesty, trust, leadership and friendship; I gained confidence and strength (both physical and mental) and most of all, rowing and being in pharmacy school was rewarding.”

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By: Elmira Fifo

Katelyn Parsons’ dedication and passion is evident in her involvement with Alpha Zeta Omega. As a leader of the pharmaceutical fraternity, Parsons has propelled the Nu Chapter toward providing excellent service to the UConn community. It is for her hard work within Alpha Zeta Omega that she was awarded the national Jay L. Pollock Supreme Undergraduate Award.

The award is usually given to one undergraduate frater per year based on fraternal activity, scholarship, leadership, and citizenship. This year, Supreme bestowed two awards, one to Parsons and the other to Taryn Merchant from the University of Maryland. This award is the highest honor an undergraduate can receive in AZO and it is given by the Supreme Directorum, pictured above with Katelyn, the national president of the fraternity.

Each candidate is nominated by their chapter and this, Parsons explains, “in itself is a great honor.” Parsons was nominated by the Nu Chapter, which she pledged during her freshman year. “It’s a tremendous honor to be recognized for just doing something that I love. No one from Nu Chapter has won this award since 1992, and it’s amazing to follow in the footsteps of previous Nu fraters who dedicated so much of their lives to the fraternity after receiving the Supreme Undergraduate Award.”

Upon entry into AZO, she worked her way up the leadership ladder taking on more responsibility each time. She
Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Student Brings an Athlete’s Drive to his Research

By: Jacquelyn Lomp

Before starting his Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences at UConn’s School of Pharmacy, Xiaoming Xu participated in athletics in China where he used to be a runner and sprinter. He competed in the 400 and 800 meter events. Winning awards as a runner, he never imagined that he would be the recipient of the Michael J. Hogan Summer Research Award for graduate students in 2011. His experience as a professional athlete helped him decide to pursue pharmacy and win this award.

His thesis focused on the application of quality by design (QbD) principles in development of liposomal drug delivery systems. By collaborating with scientists at the Food and Drug Administration, Xu’s goal is to provide critical information on how to reduce preparation variability in liposome formulations and how to increase drug encapsulation inside liposomes in order to reduce manufacturing costs. Additionally, he has developed a mathematical algorithm along with a web application for predicting drug encapsulation inside unilamellar liposomes. This will benefit pharmaceutical liposome research and development and lead to more useful and more cost effective liposome products.

Xu was drawn to UConn for the strong graduate program in the field of pharmaceutical sciences, which is home to world renowned professors that are among the best in the field of drug delivery science.

The Michael J. Hogan Summer Research Award recognizes students for excellence in research, service, and leadership within an area of expertise. Funded by the President’s Office, the 2011 award provided summer support for graduate students who were at the thesis or dissertation stage of their program. Criteria for this award include academic excellence and leadership.

While at UConn, Xu served as a leader to many undergraduate students, establishing the Controlled Release Society (CRS) Connecticut Chapter, for which he served as the founding president from 2010-2011. He also served as a teaching assistant for Dr. Diane Burgess, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Pharmaceutics, and led discussion sessions and lectures. He is highly regarded by the pharmacy students as an excellent teacher. He was an active member of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences (AAPS) Student Chapter at UConn, serving as secretary from 2007-2008 and as vice president from 2008-2009. Along with his leadership positions, he also put together the basic design for the CRS website.

Dr. Burgess was his most influential professor during his time at UConn. “Her untiring efforts in guidance, as well as her commitment and unconditioned support have been crucial to me in the past five years while working towards my dissertation,” Xu says. “Her invaluable support has not only helped me develop professionally but also contributed immensely to my growth as an individual.”

Xu is honored to be recognized for his research and service. “It’s a very good feeling to know that the research that I am doing may help someone by improving their health condition.” Following graduation, Xu will work at the FDA as a post-doctoral fellow.

Katelyn Parsons graduated Summa Cum Laude with her Bachelors of Science in Pharmacy Studies in May 2010 and as salutatorian of the Doctor of Pharmacy Class of 2012. She will be a resident at a VA hospital and continue her involvement with AZO as a frater of the Connecticut Alumni Chapter. 

Parsons was also active outside of AZO as a member of the Connecticut Society of Health-System Pharmacists and Rho Chi. Parsons also was a member of Phi Lambda Sigma and yearbook editor for the Pharmacy Student Government in her P3 year. These accomplishments demonstrate her dedication to the pharmacy community, as well as her consistent leadership skills.

served as bellarum in spring 2008, sub-directorum during her P1 year, and directorum during her P2 and P3 years. During that time, Nu Chapter expanded immensely to include 50 active fraters, and Parsons, along with her chapter, became increasingly involved in community service and professional pharmacy activities. Last year, Parsons and the Nu Chapter teamed with EcoHusky to raise over $400 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. They also participated in HuskyThon, an 18-hour dance marathon benefiting the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, through which they raised about $1600 in support of a six year-old boy recently diagnosed with leukemia. Parsons says, “It is not always easy to be the president of any organization. You often have to think of what is best for the entire organization and make tough decisions along the way, but all of the struggles are worth it when you see the organization succeed in the end.” She asserts that she is incredibly proud to be a part of this group and the great work that they do.

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A Student’s Efforts to Build Community in Israel and Beyond

By: James Morganti

“Community service is an important part of staying involved wherever you are,” says Eric Halpern. As a testament to that statement, the P4 student, in his four years at the School of Pharmacy, worked providing free health care to the disenfranchised across Connecticut with the UConn Migrant Farm Worker Clinics, offered patients important copies of their medication information in case of emergency with the local File of Life project, and organized blood pressure clinics in the area. Last spring, Halpern spent a week volunteering in Israel with 40 other college students and young professionals participating in the Jewish National Fund’s 2011 Alternative Spring Break. There, Halpern donated his time and energy to rebuild development towns on the state’s periphery and clean up after the largest forest fire in the state’s history. “This was my last true spring break,” he says, “and I wanted to make it meaningful.”

Staying nights in a hostel in the small desert town of Yerucham, Halpern and his group traveled to nearby work sites each day to take part in ambitious environmental and community based projects. First, the team traveled to Be’er Sheva, the largest city in the Southern District of Israel, to work with the non-profit group Earth’s Promise in supplying plots of land to impoverished Ethiopian families living in the area for use in self-sustained farming. There, Halpern helped to lay down compost and furnish the plots with wire fences and eco-friendly benches made from recycled tires and mud. “Hopefully, the space will be able to expand and spread the knowledge of being good to the environment,” says Halpern. “With Be’er Sheva expanding, it is important to do it right.” The following day, he visited the Kerem Behar Hanagev farm, an isolated property in the Negev Desert, to help its struggling owners in tending to their vast olive tree garden. In gratitude, the man said that it would have taken him 20 days to accomplish what they had done in just one day, and that it was truly the help of volunteers that allowed him to fulfill his dream of running the farm. “I was very happy to support him in his efforts,” says Halpern.

After clearing neglected and polluted land to open up waterways in Be’er Shiva and repainting public housing projects in a neighborhood in Dimona, the ASB group departed from the desert and set out toward the center of the country. In the city of Sderot, a dangerous war-zone threatened by Qassam rocket attacks, Halpern visited a new indoor playground with bombproof rooms that gave local children a safe place to play and their parents a location to speak with visiting therapists and social workers at no cost. Later, the group traveled to a large-scale farm in town where they worked with Leket Yisrael, a first-of-its-kind farming initiative that gathers leftover food to be donated to soup kitchens and food pantries across Israel. In just 45 minutes, says Halpern, the group managed to pick 4,000 pounds of grapefruit for donation – enough for 600 families.

For their final project before returning home, Halpern and his team traveled to the destitute site of the Mount Carmel Forest in northern Israel where only months earlier a massive forest fire had destroyed over 5 million trees and resulted in more than 40 human casualties. “It broke my heart to see the forest like that,” says Halpern. Because the ecology needed time to recover before new trees could be planted, the group worked diligently to trim and clear the remaining woods to prevent further risk of fire. “We definitely made a small dent in a much larger project,” says Halpern proudly.

Looking back, Halpern is amazed by the headway he and his new friends made in the span of one week, describing the experience as “one of the most exhausting, yet fulfilling I’ve ever had,” and hopes that his story will inspire others to volunteer. After graduation, he plans to work in community pharmacy in Connecticut, sharing that his years of volunteer work have opened his eyes to different cultures and allow him to approach each individual in a unique way. “I see pharmacists gaining more responsibility in the world of healthcare,” says Halpern. “I hope to help them increase face-to-face time with patients in the community setting and become more involved in their care.”

Eric Halpern, (left) and a fellow student, on their alternative spring break trip to Israel.

Student News Briefs

Doctor of Pharmacy Students

Kelly Cabral and Dr. Gerald Gianutsos published a “Pharmacists’ Role When Plan A Fails: Patient Considerations in the Dispute Over Plan B and Emergency Contraception” in the October 2011 issue of U.S. Pharmacist.

Dr. John Morris’ University Scholar student, Eric Gloede published a research article entitled, “A validated hybrid computational fluid dynamics-physiologically based pharmacokinetic model for respiratory tract vapor absorption in the human and rat and its application to inhalation dosimetry of dicyaeryl” that was selected as the editor’s highlight article in the September issue of Toxicological Sciences. Co-authors on the paper were graduate student Joe Cichocki and honors student Josh Baldino.

Erica Lepowski and Dr. Lisa Holle developed an electronic pamphlet for parents of students attending Edwin O. Smith High School on recognizing and preventing prescription drug abuse, entitled, “Where did that bottle go?”

Pharmacy Student Presents Honors Thesis at ICAAC Meeting

By: Elmira Fifo

Elizabeth Flatley presented her thesis work at the International Conference on Antibiotics and Chemotherapy Infectious Diseases Meeting.

The International Conference on Antibiotics and Chemotherapy (ICAAC) provides doctors, pharmacists, microbiologists, and researchers specializing in infectious diseases with the opportunity to discuss the controversies behind infectious diseases issues, and present their new findings. Elizabeth Flatley, an honors student in the School of Pharmacy, presented her honors thesis on the effects of removing the probiotic, Saccharomyces boulardii from Hartford Hospital’s formulary at the meeting. Flatley was excited by the opportunity. “I stood by my poster and explained my research.” Not every abstract or research proposal is chosen to be presented on a poster at the conference. “At any given time 3-5 sessions were going on about topics regarding infectious diseases, antibiotics and chemotherapy. There were also companies marketing their products for research [and] where published or yet to be published studies were explained on a poster.”

Flatley’s poster was viewed and critiqued by many professionals in attendance. For her thesis, she aided Dr. Michael Nailor and Dr. Ashley Wilde with their probiotic research. The probiotic was given to patients at Hartford Hospital who were also receiving antibiotics. According to Flatley, “The probiotic was given to try to prevent patients from developing Clostridium difficile associated diarrhea (CDAD) as antibiotics can kill off good bacteria as well as bad bacteria in their intestine, allowing the C. difficile bacteria to cause another infection.” Because there was no significant difference in the rates of CDAD with or without the probiotic, the research supported the hospital’s decision to remove it from the formulary.

In addition to seeing the impact of her research, Elizabeth also adds, “in the process of conducting [research] I have learned a ton about scientific discovery and how pharmacy research is done.” The meeting also allowed her to attend sessions she found interesting, such as vaccine development and research on the herpes virus. When she is not presenting research, she still manages to remain a dedicated and involved Husky. She completed her second year as an RA and is part of the Urban Service Track Program where she works with underserved communities. This program, she says, has been instrumental in shaping her future career. “It has really expanded my knowledge of medicine in general and the needs of the underserved. Through this program I learned how to incorporate the knowledge I learned in pharmacy school to help doctors, dentists and nurses help patients,” Elizabeth affirms. She cites flexibility and organization as two important tools for balancing these commitments. Her drive allows her to strive as a New England Scholar, Honors Program student and Dean’s List frequenter. The presentation at the ICAAC meeting is only the beginning for her.
Janet Paulsen, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, is helping develop new drugs to fight potentially life-threatening infectious diseases. She, along with mentor Dr. Amy Anderson, was nominated for a 2012 Women of Innovation Award by the Connecticut Technology Council. The awards recognize women who demonstrate exceptional entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation within science, technology, and engineering at the business, academic, research, and community level.

Paulsen was nominated in the Collegian Innovation and Leadership category. Using a structure-based drug design approach, Paulsen is developing novel antifungal treatments for infectious diseases. Patients whose immune systems are compromised by chemotherapy, HIV, or leukemia cannot fight off fungal infections. Paulsen is working to find drugs to fight these systemic infections by stopping the function of one of a disease’s essential proteins. This essential protein, Dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR), can be found in all living things. The challenge is to design a small molecule that will stop the function of this enzyme without targeting the human DHFR enzyme. Paulsen is working to find drugs that can inhibit the function of DHFR in fungi but not in human cells.

Another UConn researcher, Dennis Wright, associate professor of medicinal chemistry, will then make the compounds in his lab for Paulsen to test. Paulsen has already made considerable progress with drugs that can inhibit the function of DHFR in fungi without affecting human cells. She has developed several compounds that can inhibit the function of DHFR at the enzymatic level. Her work on developing new drugs to fight fungal infections is helping to develop new drugs to fight potentially life-threatening infectious diseases. She, along with several other UConn researchers, is working to find new drugs to fight fungal infections.

Dr. Anderson says of Paulsen, “Janet is a very poised and professional person, and she would be an excellent representative of us both as a school and as a program. She’s also a very poised and professional person, and she would be an excellent representative of us both as a school and as a program.”