

Getting to know ... Jürgen Venitz

The first in a series of graduate faculty, student and alumni profiles



Photos of Jürgen Venitz's students are part of his office décor.

Position: Associate professor, VCU School of Pharmacy

Hometown: Sulzbach/Saar, West Germany

Education: M.D. and Ph.D. in physiology, Universität des Saarlandes, Homburg/Saar, West Germany; postdoctoral fellow in biopharmaceutics/pharmacokinetics at University of Florida College of Pharmacy

Languages: Fluent in German, French and English; basic Latin, Spanish and Russian

Awards and honors: Too many to list, but they include the first School of Pharmacy's Excellence in Teaching Award, American College of Clinical Pharmacology Fellow, VCU Center for the Study of Biocomplexity Fellow, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists Fellow and A.D. Williams Faculty Research Award.

Family: Wife Pamela Swinson-Venitz; 26-year-old daughter Heather Swinson and 11-year-old son Wilhelm Venitz.

Spare time: Avid reader of professional literature, science fiction and occasionally politics. "I have an 11-year-old son who likes to play tennis and wrestle with his daddy." Venitz is also a big fan of basketball – "I used to play, now I watch" – especially Michael Jordan, with whom Venitz has height in common. They're both 6-feet-6-inches. "And I probably bleed orange and blue," he adds. "I'm a big Florida Gators [football] fan."

Nickname: Dr. J. (for obvious reasons, but also because before Michael Jordan, he was a huge fan of Julius "Dr. J." Erving).

Something you might not know: Worked part-time as a bartender in a student bar, Der Keller, 1977-78, and as a licensed basketball referee 1978-84.

The road to VCU

Kamlesh Thakker (Ph.D. '83) was on faculty at the University of Florida while Venitz did his postdoc in 1986. "We were good friends," Venitz says, "and he kept telling me about this great guy, Bill Barr, at VCU." Subsequently, Barr invited Venitz to visit the university and give a lecture ... which resulted in the possibility of a postdoc here. Venitz wasn't able to take him up on the offer immediately. "Barr waited eight months; I give him all the credit."

Venitz's family were coal-mining people in southwest Germany, but young Jürgen found himself attracted to basic science. After earning his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees, he says, "I came to Florida, got 'stuck' with Barr, fell in love with Richmond and liked VCU. But originally, I didn't come here with the intent of staying."

Famous last words: That was nearly 22 years ago. Arriving at the School of Pharmacy Jan. 17, 1988, Venitz jumped in with both feet. He was named a research assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutics and was medical director of the university-based BioPharm Center for Clinical Research.

At the time, the School of Pharmacy was one of few in the country conducting clinical studies, one of the school's main attractions for Venitz. A year later, he was named assistant professor as well as director of the Pharmacokinetics/Pharmacodynamics Research Laboratory, a title he still holds. The lab not only helped students get clinical experience but also supplemented his research revenue.

In addition to Barr, Venitz worked closely in those first years with colleagues such as William Garnett (B.S. '69), Harold Smith (B.S. '56, Ph.D. '62),

Jim McKenney (B.S. '68), Tom Comstock and Cindy Kirkwood (B.S. '82, Pharm.D. '85).

Why this particular program?

"I'm a translational scientist – from bench to bedside – and VCU had a Department of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutics, basic and clinical sciences in one department. Barr personified 'translational,' and that drove the Pharm.D. and Ph.D. programs."

The School of Pharmacy didn't have a formal combined Pharm.D./Ph.D. program in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Still, students were interested in doing research; by 1994, four had earned or were pursuing combined degrees.

In 1994, Venitz became an associate professor. In 1995, then-Dean John Ruggiero asked him to put together a formal Pharm.D./Ph.D. program; within a year, a combined-degree program was in place. "We had to accommodate both curricula and convince faculty that [a combined program] would not cheapen either degree. We were way ahead of the curve ... other schools visited us to see how it was done."

Susan Learned (Pharm.D./Ph.D. '97) agrees. "We were very much ahead of the game."

The added value of having both degrees is what attracted her to the program. She was already a practicing pharmacist with a B.S. degree and an ASHP residency under her belt.

"Jürgen talked me into it," she recalls, laughing. "He thought people interested in becoming independent researchers needed advanced degrees in therapeutics and clinical practice as well as in pharmacology and pharmaceutics. For me, it was

the perfect storm-type thing. I thought, 'This is exactly what I want.'"

Now, however, Venitz isn't sure if the concurrent Pharm.D./Ph.D. program can continue because the new Pharm.D. curriculum is so integrated and intense. "We're working now to see if we can make a sequential degree program, getting a Pharm.D. first and returning for a Ph.D. degree."

'Interdisciplinary kind of guy'

Currently, Venitz has appointments in all three School of Pharmacy departments. "I'm proud of that," he says, smiling. "I'm an interdisciplinary kind of guy. I enjoy that we have fences low enough that we can step over them and work together."

"You can't translate if you don't have a bench *and* a bedside!"

Most of Venitz's own research has been directed toward drug development. One of the projects of which he's most proud is RSR13 – Efavoxiral – a drug for radiation oncology that affects the interaction between hemoglobin and oxygen. Don Abraham, a former chairman of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, discovered it.

"We took it all the way to the bedside. It was first given to humans in 1995," Venitz says. Sponsored by Allos Therapeutics Inc., a company Abraham helped create, Efavoxiral unfortunately failed clinical trials. "But," Venitz says, "I hope this serves as a role model. VCU is uniquely qualified to do this, as long as the 'fences' are lowered."

Outside the university, Venitz works as a scientific expert consultant for organizations such as the Food and Drug Administration, where he also *[continued on page 3]*



From the Dean

There's a lot of history to the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs, and I consider it an honor that the School of Pharmacy is carrying on this fine tradition. It was great to see so many emeritus faculty at last year's 50th Anniversary Graduate Reunion. These are the pioneers, the people who took risks.

In 51 years, we've seen remarkable success. Where are we going? Upward and onward. We have 101 graduate students enrolled this year, up from 91 last year. Twenty-six students graduated this spring and summer, and 25 new students have joined the graduate programs this year.

We're preparing our students to conduct interdisciplinary research, to work on collaborative teams in areas ranging from genomics to epidemiology. It's exciting that we can be leaders both nationally and internationally. I think our future is extremely positive.

Victor A. Yanchick, Ph.D.
Dean



From the Director

Regardless of when you graduated, I am certain you will be surprised by the changes in the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs.

The most obvious change is the rapid expansion of the program; we have almost tripled in enrollment in the last 10 years and doubled the number of applications in the last three years. We've also expanded the student development programs we offer to make our students more well-rounded and competitive when they graduate.

But, perhaps most importantly, we are reaching out to you, our alumni, to help us enrich our program. Who else can provide the combined perspective of School of Pharmacy graduate programs and careers in the pharmaceutical industry?

Please find a way to participate, either through teaching, mentorship, participation in Research and Career Day, or through corporate or individual donations. Our future leaders and I thank you!

Susanna Wu-Pong, Ph.D.
Director, Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs

Research and Career Day wants you

Been wondering how you can "give back" to your graduate alma mater?

The School of Pharmacy's 12th annual Research and Career Day is the ideal way to do just that, having been designed to showcase the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs.

Graduate alumni are invited to hear a keynote speaker, attend a poster session and mentor current students. Graduate and Pharm.D. students and postdoctoral fellows, in turn, have the opportunity to participate in the poster session and to meet and "pick the brains" of alumni in academe, government and the pharmaceutical industry.

What better way for alumni to contribute to students' professional development while interacting with emerging scholars? Save the date: Oct. 16 at Biotech One (which, by the way, now houses the bulk of the school's Department of Medicinal Chemistry).



Mohamadi Sarkar (Ph.D. '90) spoke at last year's Research and Career Day.

In addition to student meetings and poster sessions, Research and Career Day features a welcome breakfast and a talk by Christopher L. Waller, senior director of Precompetitive Collaborations in Worldwide Technology for Pfizer in Groton, Conn. Waller's topic will be "Science as a Business: Past, Present and Future Trends in the Pharmaceutical Industry."

To make the day complete, graduate alumni and students are invited to an evening reunion/reception where they can mix and mingle with emeritus and current faculty.

"I appreciate that they ask alumni to come back and participate," says Vijay Ramchandani (Ph.D. '96). He participated in the School of Pharmacy's 10th annual Research and Career Day, and he's hoping to make it back this year.

Interested? All events are free, but registration is required. Visit www.pharmacy.vcu.edu and click on "Calling all graduate students and alumni" under Highlights. Or call Susanna Wu-Pong, director of the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs, at (804) 828-4328 or e-mail swupong@vcu.edu.

Don't delay. You still have time to sign up for the day's events. The deadline is Oct. 9.

Lowenthal Award benefits students, research

Asked if he'd like to talk about being the most recent recipient of the Lowenthal Award, Atul Jain replied: "I will be happy to share my excitement with you regarding the award!"

Jain, who arrived at the School of Pharmacy last fall, is working on his Ph.D. degree. A native of Mumbai, India, he earned his B.S. in pharmacy there, as well as an M.S. in pharmacy sciences with a major in pharmaceutical chemistry.

He plans to visit India in December, his first time home in a year. But here in Richmond, he said, "I have a good community from my country."

Jain's advisor, and the person who recommended that he apply for the award, is Richard A. Glennon, chairman of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry.

"Atul is working with 'allosteric modulators' of nicotinic acetylcholine (nACh) receptors," Glennon said, "more specifically, selective modulators of $\alpha 4$ - $\beta 2$ nACh receptors."

Activation of these receptors seems to be beneficial in neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. Direct-acting orthosteric activators might desensitize these receptors, Glennon said, so a selective $\alpha 4$ - $\beta 2$ agonist would be a good thing ... if it weren't for the desensitization problem. Unfortunately, he added, selective $\alpha 4$ - $\beta 2$ orthosteric agonists don't yet exist.

"But positive 'allosteric modulators' can potentiate the effects of Ach at nACh receptors without acting at the orthosteric site. Thus, desensitization should not be a problem."

European investigators identified desformylflustrabromine (dFBr) – the first selective " $\alpha 4$ - $\beta 2$ allosteric modulator" – by sheer accident, said Glennon. "We reported the first chemical synthesis of this agent [found in a North Sea organism], and did so as a water-soluble salt. We confirmed and extended its actions ... and we are now trying



The Lowenthal Award helps fund Atul Jain's Ph.D. research.

to identify what structural features of dFBr are important for activity."

The Medicinal Chemistry laboratory's approach is "deconstruction-reconstruction-elaboration." With grant funding from the Virginia Center on Aging, important structural features necessary for allosteric activation of $\alpha 4$ - $\beta 2$ receptors have been identified.

"We are now trying to develop agents with optimal activity," said Glennon. "This is the basis of Atul's project." Jain, who also has a teaching assistantship, expects to graduate by 2013.

Funding for the award comes from the Werner Lowenthal Fund, which was established in 2000 by Lowenthal's widow, Hilda Meth. Lowenthal, who joined the MCV School of Pharmacy faculty in 1961, served as professor of pharmacy and pharmaceuticals and director of continuing education. He retired in 1992 and died in 1994.

Students will remember Lowenthal for his Pharmaceuticals Ethics course, his rock paperweights and his passion for research and scholarship. In that regard, he was especially interested in issues such as "orphan drugs." Ironically, he died of a disease about which little is known and for which there is no cure: Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, which affects only about 200 people annually in the United States.

In establishing a fund in her husband's name, Meth's hope was that the research funded by the scholarship would focus on these kinds of disorders, thus offering experimental treatment as an option for people diagnosed with them. As a result, the fund helps support School of Pharmacy Ph.D.-bound graduate students who specialize in a pharmaceutical science and who are participating in research in genetically based neurological diseases.

Recipients are selected every other year by committee. The stipend is typically \$5,000 per year for two years, and the fund is managed by the MCV Foundation.

Past Lowenthal Award winners include Gareth Jennings, currently working on his Ph.D.; Uma Siripurapu (Ph.D. '09); Angela Men (Ph.D. '04, team leader for FDA's Office of Clinical Pharmacology); and Manik Pullagurla (Ph.D. '03, co-owner of a pharmaceutical company in India). Men worked with the school's Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and the rest worked out of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry.

Siripurapu, who is currently employed as a pharmacist, said, "I do not think I would have completed my Ph.D. without the financial support I received from the Lowenthal award."

The application deadline for the next Lowenthal Award is November 2010. Applicants are asked to write to Susanna Wu-Pong, director of the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs, and to include a letter of support from a faculty member who has agreed to mentor the student in this area. Questions? E-mail Wu-Pong at swupong@vcu.edu or call (804) 828-4328.

If you're interested in Werner Lowenthal's photography collection, "Earth Sculptures," visit pharmacy.vcu.edu, click on Alumni, Donors and Friends, then click Information.

Jürgen Venitz

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serves on drug-approval advisory committees. In 2002, he took a six-month sabbatical with the FDA's Office of Clinical Pharmacology and Biopharmaceutics, during which time he became interested in risk assessment and risk management.

The most notable thing about his career? Venitz grins. "I'm a nonpharmacist who's teaching 22 years at a pharmacy school! When Barr put me into a tenure-track position, I thought, 'Why would they hire an M.D.?' But it never got in my way. Maybe it helped me more than not."

In Venitz's office, many of the photos are of former students. "The classes then were much more closeknit because of their small size, and students became extended family. We got to know each other one-on-one; we would socialize.

"I still look at students as part of an extended family. I like to see them grow. I like to see the bulbs go off in their heads."



Ramchandani

Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Ramchandani remembers Venitz as very patient and yet passionate about his work. "He gets excited

Vijay Ramchandani (Ph.D. '96) isn't surprised to hear how important students are to his former advisor. "I was officially the first Ph.D. student he took on," says Ramchandani, who's a staff scientist and unit chief for the National Institutes of Health's National

about it. He's engaging and interactive and would always challenge his students."

"When we were in the lab group," Ramchandani says, "it was a very closeknit and warm environment. ... It was very rewarding for me." As it happens, the lab is also where he met his future wife, Roshni Ghosh (Ph.D. '97).

In 2002, when Venitz was at the FDA, he and his former student reconnected. Since then, the two have collaborated on several projects. Venitz also invited Ramchandani to become an affiliate faculty member and help students who were conducting alcohol research.

Ramchandani had a good role model for teaching in Venitz. "As a teacher," he says, "he's one of the best I've ever had in all my years of college and graduate study."

Postbaccalaureate Pharm.D.: changing the face of pharmacy



Calling all postbaccalaureate Pharm.D.s! We need your help. Photos of the Pharm.D. classes of 1981 through 1996 now are posted on the School of Pharmacy Web site, but we need assistance with IDs. For example, here's the class of 1983, but we've only identified Anne Hume (left) and Don Marsh (center) on the first row and Kenneth Kolb (center) and Sidney Fannon (right) on the second row. Please visit www.pharmacy.vcu.edu and click on "Who is that Pharm.D.?" under School of Pharmacy Headlines. If you can identify yourself and/or other classmates, e-mail pharmacyalum@vcu.edu or call (804) 828-6470 with the information. Also, if you have a photo of the class of 1978, 1979 or 1980, please send it our way. Thanks!

It was the best of times, it was the best of times.

That's not a typo. Talk to just about any graduate of the School of Pharmacy's postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. program, and two main themes quickly emerge:

1. Because the program was new and the classes were small, a feeling of closeness was fostered that, in many cases, continues to this day.
2. Earning a Pharm.D. opened many doors in terms of career opportunities.

You also hear many of the same faculty names cited as having been influential in the postbaccalaureate program: William Barr, James McKenney, William Garnett, Ron Polk, Ralph Small, Wes Poynor, Doug Hepler and more.

When Bill Barr arrived at the university in the 1970s, one of the first items on his agenda was to help develop a Pharm.D. program and curriculum. At the time, the vast majority of pharmacists still were graduating with bachelor of science degrees.

Barr, now professor of pharmacy and director of the school's Center for Drug Studies, had experience with doctor of pharmacy programs early on: He was one of the first students to earn a Pharm.D. from the University of California at San Francisco, which offered one of the first Pharm.D. programs in the country. He also had been instrumental in developing a similar program at State University of New York at Buffalo.

"We already had some Pharm.D. on the faculty here, and I recruited some more," Barr says. "[To develop the program] seemed to me an interesting challenge. We were also interested in the development of what we called clinical pharmacy."

A clinical pharmacy program already had been set up in the hospital, and part of Barr's mission was to offer something similar in the School of Pharmacy. "We got some bright, enthusiastic people when clinical pharmacy was evolving throughout the country ... I would see who was presenting the best papers, who were the scholars."

Warren Weaver, then dean of the school, agreed that the time was right for what would amount to a two-year graduate program. But implementation had its ups and downs. "It took a lot of effort by a lot of people," Barr says. Once the program and curriculum were planned, they had to be approved by faculty, then by university and state committees.

There was also a certain amount of territorialism. "There was concern that pharmacists suddenly were interested in how medications were made and used, concern that they would want to prescribe.

"I had to assure people that this was not the objective. ... Once past that, we got the go-ahead."

Helmed by Jim McKenney, the postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. program began in 1976, with the first class graduating in 1978. The last class was admitted in 1996, at which point the traditional B.S. program had begun its transition to an all-Pharm.D. curriculum.

The school was fortunate, says Barr, in that so many of the early Pharm.D. students were exceptional. Classes were intentionally small. "There was a lot of one-on-one. Classes were very interactive and participatory, with deep discussion. There was a lot of give and take between faculty and students."

The first year was didactic, and the second year involved clerkships and research projects.

McKenney, who earned his B.S. from the school in 1968, laughingly recalls, "My clerkship was an afternoon tour of the hospital!" In the new postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. program, he says, "Every student had to conceive and produce a research project, many of which were published.

"We tried to offer experiential education in the final year. We put together a powerful curriculum."

McKenney, who had earned his Pharm.D. at Wayne State University before assuming directorship of VCU's Pharm.D. program, now is a professor emeritus. He is also president/CEO of Richmond-based National Clinical Research Inc.

When the School of Pharmacy's program began, Barr says, Pharm.D. degrees were available at fewer than 10 pharmacy schools nationwide.

"[Our program] was very rigorous," he adds. Newly enrolled Pharm.D. students already were several years into their education and often into their profession, as well. "It was a highly motivated and mostly mature student body with great aptitude."



Jim McKenney



Bill Barr



Joan and Gene Cefali



Diane and Anthony Coniglio

Among those highly motivated, mature students was Kenneth Kolb (Pharm.D. '82). Kolb had earned his B.S. at Long Island University's Brooklyn College of Pharmacy.

But, he says, "My B.S. was retail-oriented. After a hospital internship and a pharmacy residency in Philadelphia, I realized how deficient my clinical knowledge was. ... If you had an ASHP-accredited residency, that was about as good as you got. I was working as a hospital pharmacist and decided to start looking at Pharm.D. programs."

During his first year, Kolb recalls, laughing, there was no place to hide with such a small group. "Some classes were in McGuire, but most were in conference rooms in the library. It was very cozy."

At the time, recent Pharm.D. graduates often became faculty. Kolb stayed on for about three years as adjunct faculty and was one of three pharmacists who were contracted by the VA (from the School of Pharmacy) to start offering clinical services at the VA hospital.

Since then, he has worked for a small start-up company and as director of Health Informatics at First Health Services Corp.

Acknowledging an eclectic resume, he says his advantage is in knowing the data side as well as the pharmacy side. "If I want to develop a new application, I don't have to have a pharmacy person. My clinical background helps me see the big picture."

One of Kolb's friends, Gene Cefali, was the school's first Pharm.D. graduate to simultaneously earn a Ph.D. After receiving his B.S. from St. John's University in New York and while working at St. Luke's Hospital in Richmond, he had looked into the possibility of a combined degree.

"I interacted with a lot of people who helped mold me," says Cefali, citing "Bill Barr and his open-mindedness ... as to how I wanted to design my program" and Jim McKenney, one of the major reasons Cefali chose the School of Pharmacy. "The clinical program was one of the strongest at the time."

After receiving his Pharm.D./Ph.D. in 1987, Cefali's first job was with Schering-Plough in Florida.

He also worked for a start-up company in Richmond and, later, Kos Pharmaceuticals. Cefali now works part-time as senior vice president of clinical pharmacology and formulation development for another start-up, the Boston-based Cortria Corp. And recently, he says, "I decided to put out my shingle as a drug development consultant." E.A. Cefali Pharmaceutical Consultant is based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

With the Pharm.D./Ph.D. combined degree, Cefali says, "You have so many tools, you can write your own ticket ... at least in the pharmaceutical industry world. I found I was able to move very quickly."

Because they were already "out in the world," many Pharm.D. candidates were married. One couple who combined their marriage with scholarship were the Coniglios: Anthony (Pharm.D. '86) and Diane (Pharm.D. '87), both of whom had earned their B.S. degrees at University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy.

The two were married just before moving to Richmond for jobs in the hospital. "At the time, it was a pretty nice opportunity," Tony Coniglio recalls. But they both felt the need for more education. "The plan was, I'll do it, then she'll do it."

It was a very strong research program, says Coniglio. Following graduation, his wife began working for a medical writing company; eventually she started her own company, Opus Medical Communications Ltd. Coniglio himself variously worked as director, global brand head or vice president for corporations such as Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pharmacia and MedPointe. Last year, he started his own New Jersey-based company, Opus Pharma Consulting.

Coniglio believes a combination of credentials, experience and relationships are responsible for his success. "But," he adds, "I always go back to the training we received. I think the foundation was the Pharm.D. program."

Like many postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. alums, Coniglio can name most of his former classmates. "Our classes were pretty close," he says. "We've even had mini-reunions in New Jersey."

"There was a lot of fun in the program," agrees Patty Slattum, who earned her B.S. degree here in 1985, her Pharm.D./Ph.D. combined degree

in 1992 and has been on the faculty since 1996. She's now an associate professor and director of the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program.

Between her bachelor's and postbaccalaureate degrees, Slattum worked for A.H. Robins' drug metabolism department and for Richmond Memorial Hospital. She originally had planned to pursue only a Ph.D. "Adding the Pharm.D. – the clinical experience and decision-making you learn – turned out to be essential to the job I do now," she says.

Susan Learned (Pharm.D./Ph.D. '97) entered the program with the Pharm.D. class of 1994. "Our postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. program was rated one of the top five in the country," she says. "You were able to work with other departments, having pharmacology and toxicology right there, doing analytical method studies in Smith, running across the street to do patient physicals, screening patients for your trial."

Learned's final rotation and first job after graduating was at the former Glaxo Wellcome. Based in North Carolina, she is still with the company – now GlaxoSmithKline – where she currently is serving a one-year appointment in worldwide business development as director of scientific licensing for the Neurosciences Center of Excellence in Drug Discovery.

In addition to a good program, great job opportunities and friends for life, there's one other thing many postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. graduates share: a continued relationship with the school. Kolb, for example, is treasurer of the MCV Alumni Association board of directors, has guest-lectured and has participated in Research and Career Day. Learned is a member of the School of Pharmacy's National Advisory Council, and Cefali has been a guest speaker for the School of Pharmacy's student chapter of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists.

Following the nationwide trend that it had helped initiate, the School of Pharmacy completed its curricular transition when the first all-Pharm.D. class graduated in 1999.

"It was a privilege," McKenney says, "to be part of something that would change the face of pharmacy."

Grad News



Malgorzata Dukat, associate professor, and Gretchen Brophy, professor, were all smiles at graduation.

WELCOME, NEW ALUMNI

Congratulations to our newest group of graduate alumni! 2009 “graduate graduates” include:

Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences

(name followed by dissertation title and advisor)

Deepika Arora: “In vitro Models for Inhaled Corticosteroid (ICS) Aerosols: A study of their Biopharmaceutics and Pharmacology” (Masahiro Sakagami)

Pooja Desai: “Adenosine Dimethyltransferase KsgA: Biochemical Characterization of the Protein and its Interaction with the 30S Subunit” (Jason Rife)

Ashwini Goswami: “Development of PPAR-receptor agonists as therapeutic agents for diabetes” (Martin Safo)

Davis S. Lee: “Age-Related Differences in IN-VITRO sensitivity to inhibition of human red blood cell (RBC) Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) and plasma butyrylcholinesterase (BuChE) by the cholinesterase (ChE) inhibitors physostigmine (PHYS), pyridostigmine (PYR), Donepezil (DON) and Galantamine (GAL)” (Jürgen Venitz)

Lokesh Jain: “Identification of clinical, laboratory, and genetic covariates for pharmacokinetics, efficacy, and toxicity of sorafenib in patients with solid tumors” (Jürgen Venitz)

Chandravel Krishnasamy: “Molecular Modeling Studies of Heparin and Heparin Mimetics Binding to Coagulation Proteins” (Umesh Desai)

Donna McGovern: “Salvinorin A: Fragment Synthesis and Modeling Studies” (Richard Westkaemper)

Suzanne Toussaint Phillips: “The Economic Impact of Antimicrobial Resistance in Patients with Nosocomial Staphylococcus aureus Bacteremia” (Spencer Harpe/Ron Polk)



Spencer Harpe, assistant professor, hooded Suzanne Phillips (Ph.D. '09)

Jitesh Shah: “Design and Synthesis of Molecular Probes for the Study of 5-HT_{2A} and H₁ Receptors” (Richard Westkaemper)

Uma Siripurapu: “Studies on binding of tryptamine related analogs at 5-HT₆ receptors” (Richard A. Glennon)

Ashutosh Tripathi: “Development of Hint Based Computational Tools for Drug Design: Applications in the Design and Development of Novel Anti-Cancer Agents” (Glen Kellogg)

Soniya Vaidya: “Formation and Efflux of 2,4-Dinitrophenyl-S-glutathione from Cultured Human Term Placental Villous Tissue Fragments” (Phillip Gerk)

Hala Zreikat: “Effect of rennin angiotensin system inhibition on insulin resistance’s cardiovascular sequelae” (Kai Cheang)

M.S. in pharmaceutical sciences

(name followed by thesis title and advisor)

Alsalmán Abdulhaliq: “Impact of Statin Therapy on Outcomes in Aneurysmal Subarachnoid Hemorrhage Patients” (Gretchen Brophy)

Ali Mohammad Alhammad: “Use of Lactobacillus in the treatment of clostridium difficile infection in hospitalized adult patients” (Spencer Harpe)

Katie Alix: “Novel analogs of m-chlorophenylguanidine as 5-HT₃ receptor ligands” (Malgorzata Dukat)

Lindsey Aschenbach: “Non-Peptide Mu Opioid Receptor Selective Antagonists: Design, Synthesis and Biological Studies” (Yan Zhang)

Bijoy Jatin Desai: “New Allosteric Inhibitors of Thrombin” (Umesh Desai)

Abhishek Gulati: “Factors influencing placental transfer of Lopinavir: binding, uptake and efflux” (Phillip Gerk)

Priyanka P. Kakad: “Measurement of Adherence with Anti-hypertensive Medications in Older Adults: Self-report vs. Prescription Pill Records” (Patricia Slattum)

Anuja Modi: “Mutagenesis and Spectroscopic Studies of Mycobacterium tuberculosis sterol 14a demethylase” (John Hackett)

Jenson Verghese: “Synthesis and Biochemical Studies on Sulfated Monomers of Low Molecular Weight Lignins” (Umesh Desai)

Pharm.D./Certificate in Aging Studies

Kara Butler

David Clopton

Laurie Oldiges

Richard Scanlon Jr.

Pharm.D./M.B.A.

Adrian Campbell

Rhenda Harris

Lisa Marston

Nhu-Oanh Pham

Michelle Pohoreskey

Grad News

AWARD-WINNING STUDENTS

Kudos to 2008-09 award-winning graduate students:

Prajakta Badri: Jyotsna and Mavji Thakker Award, established in memory of the late parents of Kamlesh Thakker (Ph.D. '83), in recognition of graduate students in Pharmaceutics and to assist with educational needs.

Amit Gandhi: J. Doyle Smith Award, given to the student in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry who has achieved the greatest distinction in scholarship, research, teaching and service.

Atul Jain: Lowenthal Award, created to foster research excellence in genetically based neurological disorders.

Lokesh Jain: John Wood Award, given to the student in the Department of Pharmaceutics who has achieved the greatest distinction in scholarship, research, teaching and service.

Lokesh Jain: Charles T. Rector and Thomas W. Rorrer Jr. Dean's Award, established by Jacqueline V. Rorrer in memory of her late husband, Charles Rector, and in honor of her current husband, Thomas Rorrer (B.S. '52), for a graduate student who best demonstrates excellence in scholarship, research, teaching and service.

I-Wen Yu: Victor A. Yanchick Award, given to the student in the Department of Pharmacy who has achieved the greatest distinction in scholarship, research, teaching and service.

Also, **Arpamas Seetasith**, who is working on a master of science degree in pharmacy administration, received the 2009 AcademyHealth Disparities Interest Group Emerging Scholar Award in June. Seetasith, who is interested in pharmacoconomics and health outcomes, was recognized for her work on racial disparities and barriers to drug use in diabetes patients in the United States.

She also was awarded the Best Student Podium Presentation Award at the International Society for Pharmacoconomics and Outcomes Research's 14th Annual International Meeting in May, and she is the recipient of the School of Pharmacy's first Pharmaceutical Economics and Policy Program graduate fellowship.

"This is terrific," says her advisor, **James X. Zhang**, associate professor of pharmacy and director of the Pharmaceutical Economics and Policy Program. "It showcases the value of education at VCU and recognition of our young emerging scholar in the field."

AND NOW THE PROGRAM IS 51...

The graduate program observed its 50th anniversary in October 2008 in conjunction with the School of Pharmacy's 11th Annual Research and Career Day. Featured at the anniversary event were **Susanna Wu-Pong**, director of the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program; **Bill Barr**, Department of Pharmacy professor; and **Dean Victor Yanchick**.

Also on hand were emeriti faculty **Marvin Boots**, **Bill Soine** and **Jim Stubbins** (medicinal chemistry), **John Ruggiero** and **Harold Smith** (pharmaceutics) and **Norman Hilliard** (pharmacy). Ruggiero was dean of the school from 1982 to 1996.



Amit Somani identified the most circa-1975 faculty members.

Amit Somani, a student who attended the event, won the 50th Anniversary Graduate Alumni Reunion Faculty Name Game by identifying the most School of Pharmacy faculty members in a circa 1975 photo. To see the results, visit www.pharmacy.vcu.edu, click on News Archive (below School of Pharmacy Headlines), then select 2008 on the drop-down list and hit Search. Check out the fourth item, "It's the Faculty Name Game!"

Somani is pursuing a Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences with a specialization in clinical research. His advisors are **Bill Barr** and **William Garnett**.

GET LINKED IN

Interested in connecting or reconnecting with fellow graduate alumni, faculty and students? Want to share news of or discuss job openings? Join the VCU School of Pharmacy page on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Patty Slattum (B.S. '85, Pharm.D./Ph.D. '92) is the recipient of the university's Distinguished Service Award. Slattum, associate professor and director of the Geriatric Pharmacotherapy Program, was honored at the 27th Opening Faculty Address and Convocation Ceremony in early September.

Tish Moczygemba, assistant professor of pharmacy, has been named the 2009 recipient of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Research and Education Foundation's Junior Investigator Research Grant. The Junior Investigator Research Grant Program supports practice-based research in medication use conducted by pharmacist new-investigators.

Karen Bryant has joined the Dean's Office as graduate education coordinator, reporting to Susanna Wu-Pong, director of Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Programs. Bryant served for nine years as the Master's of Public Health Program coordinator for the School of Medicine's Department of Epidemiology and Community Health.

David Holdford, associate professor of pharmacy, is now vice chairman of graduate studies and graduate program director for pharmacotherapy and pharmacy administration.

Joanne Peart, associate professor of pharmaceutics, received the School of Pharmacy's 2009 Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Emeritus professor **Jim Stubbins** died April 29 at age 78, just weeks after being diagnosed with stomach cancer. Stubbins, who retired from the School of Pharmacy in 1996, earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Nevada at Reno, a master's degree in organic chemistry from Purdue University and a doctorate in medicinal chemistry from the University of Minnesota. Survivors include his wife, two daughters, a son and six grandchildren.

In a May 2 story in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, **Richard A. Glennon**, chairman of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, dubbed Stubbins "the answer man. ... If you ever had a scientific question, he was the one to turn to. He knew it all." Pharmacy school staff, he said, also sought Stubbins on "university policy questions, personnel questions, personal questions or whatever." Emeritus professor **Monty Kier** added, "He was an excellent, excellent teacher and well-recognized by his students."

The Pipeline is a publication of the VCU School of Pharmacy. Readers may submit comments or questions to Cynthia McMullen, editor, by calling (804) 828-6470 or e-mailing chmcmullen@vcu.edu.

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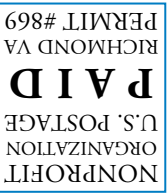
Got news?

Please e-mail any alumni updates to pharmacyalum@vcu.edu.



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Who's who? The postbaccalaureate Pharm.D. class of 1994 included (first row, left to right) Jean-Venable "Kelly" Robertson Goode, Sarah Tollison Melton, Evan Sisson and Laurie Cooksey; and (second row) Tricia McNulty Russell, Susan Learned, Carol Redford Perkins, Angela Cimmino and Mark Wheeler. See story, page 4.