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Upcoming Events:

Last Day of Class 05/06
Finals 05/11-05/15
P2 & P1 (Classes of 2012 & 2013) 08/17
Start Orientation
Classes 08/24
Commence

APhA 2009

Where the Stars of Pharmacy Shine!!!

By: Namrata Trivedi

After flying all day, I didn’t know what to expect when I stepped off the plane into the warm sun-lit day in San Antonio. As our Hawaii chapter convened under the sign welcoming the Stars of Pharmacy to the American Pharmacist Association (APhA) Annual meeting, a thrill ran through me. Together we pondered how many of the people walking by would become future colleagues of ours. That evening as we explored the city, its stunning turn of the century homes and the famous Riverwalk, we began excitedly planning for the next day. I retired to our room, filled with anticipation of all the possibilities to come that weekend.

The next morning, striding in with our matching shirts, we checked in at the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center. While waiting in line we met many supportive pharmacists as well as some of our teachers’ teachers. It was amazing to see the support and excitement that pharmacists from around the nation had for our school and our presence at the meeting. That evening we went to our first round-table discussion open for the new chapters and schools. There were many students that were in the same position as us, and it was a comfort to know we were not alone in the process of building something new and all the challenges that go with it.

After this meeting, we were off to the opening social events! The convention center was filled with pharmacists and their families, students, organizers, and all manners of people that had a link to the world of pharmacy. We indulged in Tex-Mex, watched armadillo races, ... Continue on Page 3

“Of all the schools present, they were most excited about ours.”

UHH COP’s APhA represented by Mimi Pezzuto, Garrett, Ambrish, Jim, Keegan, Jill Namrata, Amy, & Lisa
A Building Update  By Lindsey Aoki

The UHH COP is now in the Spring semester of 2009 and still using facilities provided by the University of Hawaii at Hilo. The COP temporary building is scheduled to be finished by June of 2009, and will be ready for classes in August. The facility is across from the Imiloa Astronomy Center on the upper part of the UHH campus.

I decided to do some research and questioning with UHH COP professor and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Dr. Edward Fisher.

According to Fisher, there will be one lecture hall for use for the fall semester, so one of the classes will be held there. The College of Pharmacy will continue using the two classrooms provided by UHH, UCB 100 and Wentworth 1. Due to scheduling conflicts for professors who are doing clinical rotations, Fisher predicts that there will be afternoon classes, with a possibility of having a few classes in the morning. Fisher hopes that exams will be taken in the mornings instead of the evening, which is how exams are currently conducted. The new modular buildings will have technology to run PowerPoint, which is how professors are currently conducting their lectures, as well as air conditioning and will have limited outlets for student computer use.

Fisher also noted that the College of Pharmacy cannot continue to use the facilities at UHH, so more funding will need to be allocated to give the college its permanent building. The Hawaii Legislature will determine the fate of the college’s permanent building in upcoming legislative meetings.

For more information, please contact the College of Pharmacy, 808-933-2909, visit the website, pharmacy.uhh.hawaii.edu, or at pharmacy@hawaii.edu.

Message from the Dean

Dear Students,

First of all, I would like to thank and congratulate the organizers, supporters and editorial staff of this Newsletter. This marks yet another important milestone in the development of our College, and exemplifies your remarkable spirit in still another way. I would also like to thank your faculty advisor for her participation in this initiative. Perhaps one day she will tell you about a little ditty called Under-the-Counter. Best wishes for the success of this unique medium of communication.

Sometimes it is the little things that make a big difference. A college without a logo is like a human being without a signature. I am pleased to inform you our logo contest has yielded a winner. An unveiling will occur on May 2, 2009, at the second annual lu’au, to which you are all invited. We will also announce this year’s Preceptor of the Year and, for the first time, Faculty Excellence Awards will be presented, based on the ballots cast by you.

By now you have seen some of our modular buildings have arrived. It may not be the Taj Mahal, but it will be ours, and we will have occupancy by next semester. Other aspects of our building program are being vigorously pursued; I hope to present updates soon.

Based on our collective experience, we are working toward implementing all of the things that will enrich your experience here. A good example is creation of our student chapter of the APhA. Also, we continue to seek and identify additional scholarship support, and revel in the dedication of your Student Council. More announcements will be made on May 2.

We know the circumstances are not ideal due to the situation of our physical facility. Your cooperation and understanding are truly appreciated. At the same time, we know your educational experience and training are not being compromised. Nearly everyday I hear our faculty bragging about your accomplishments, your spirit, your potential, your vibrancy. You make us proud. Keep your spirits high and don’t forget your mantra – It’s time to study now.

Hail UH Hilo. Graduation day will be here before you know it. You are the life of this College. We will not let you down.

John M. Pezzuto
Professor and Dean
collected paper flowers and even got some of the guys to ride a mechanical bull. From there we went to the students welcome social. Here the student chapters celebrated the 40th year since their establishment and there was even a cake for the occasion. Students competed in a Guitar Hero competition as they mingled on the outdoor patio. Members running for offices came around making their pitches, as music played in the background upon the request of different schools. It was an atmosphere of student unity and excitement.

Saturday the real work began for us officers. We woke up bright and early to attend meeting focused towards our specific positions. As our individual meetings came to a close, students were ushered into the grand ballroom for a larger roundtable discussion. Hundreds of students showed up, and it seemed as though the room was bulging at the seams trying to keep us contained. Who knew a grand ballroom could ever seem so small! As the day continued there was a large pharmacy expo with different companies. The opening general session featured Olympian Joey Cheek who spoke of his philanthropic activities and of all the good we, as student pharmacist, can do. Others also spoke on how we may be successful in pharmacy and treating our patients.

As the weekend continued Chapters met with their regional members and conducted a caucus in preparation for Sunday’s main event, the House of Delegates. This moment was why we were there. Our chapter received our charter. Now we were official. As the House got down to business, I sat enthralled at how efficiently business was conducted and how vitalizing it was to be taking part in putting together resolutions and policies that represented our views as students, worked towards furthering and bettering our education, and give us important tools for the future. There was debate on universal coverage, OTC labeling and public awareness campaigns. The beauty of the discussion was that people worked to keep personal opinion at bay and instead look to what was the best for our profession and patients. These resolutions would be implemented and could affect national changes to health care, governmental policies and even pharmacy practice. We may not realize our potential to instigate change as individuals, but being a part of APhA gives us strength in numbers to spearhead the change we want to see.

Coming off that exciting afternoon there more social events which allowed us to meet many of our colleagues and also experience the aura of San Antonio. Sadly, the next morning I had to leave this world of activism, camaraderie, support, and enthusiasm. No matter who you are within the world of pharmacy, there is a place for you at the APhA national meeting. It is a place to meet others like yourself, learn about our trade, educate yourself in whatever interests you, but most of all, it is a place where you feel the strength of the pharmacy family and it revitalizes your spirit of taking action to make yourself and our profession the best it can be.
An Interview with Dr. Ma

By Namrata Trivedi

As Dr. Ma moves into her new position and new office, I sat down with her to discover the person behind the teacher. For Dr. Ma, accepting a teaching position in Hawaii meant she was coming home. She grew up in Honolulu, and like our President, went to Punahou High School.

Dr. Ma went to pharmacy school at UCSF, did an oncology residency at Penn, and helped to establish cancer clinics in Hong Kong. But her real adventures came as she pursued her interest in cycling. For 5 years Dr. Ma led bike tours through back roads in exciting locations like Napa, Yellowstone, and China. That’s a lot of world to cover on a bike. But cycling back roads were not her only extreme adventure; in addition she has gone to Mount Everest’s base camp and spent the night stuck out on our volcano.

Dr. Ma’s adventures have also allowed her to take a lot of photographs, leading to her other passion: photography. She is quite skilled, and has even showcased her photography skills in shows at various small galleries.

A residency in oncology created some unique experiences for Dr. Ma, most of which involved pain management. Some of her most interesting patients she met at the methadone clinic she worked for in Philadelphia. There were pregnant drug seekers, addicts, and all other types of patients. Her most amusing moment occurred when she walked unannounced into a room to do a pain management consult and found her patient and his “friend” engaging in a little fun. So word of advice: don’t forget to knock before walking into a room because you never know what you will find.

Now, I know that everyone wants advice on the easiest way to get an A, so I asked Dr. Ma what she thought it took to get an A from her. Like all teachers, she recommends, “study hard.”

Final words from Dr. Ma on her philosophy to being successful: “It’s all about the patient.”

An Interview with a Retail Pharmacist

By Dan Hu

Retail pharmacy is just one of the many paths a Pharm.D can pursue in his or her career. There are many retail pharmacies in Hilo, the majority of which participate in on-site rotations with the UHH CoP. These pharmacists are excited about the idea that we will someday be their colleagues. I wanted to present you with an opportunity to get to know one of the many retail pharmacists in Hilo: George Karvas, who manages Longs Punahele. He graduated from Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR and has been practicing for 18 years. George has been very friendly and informative in the pharmacy, and it’s encouraging to see his positive attitude towards both students and customers.

What do you like best/least about your job?

My favorite part of retail pharmacy is interacting and servicing my patients with accuracy, care, and professionalism. The part I like the least is dealing with 3rd party insurance billing problems.

What are some things you do as a pharmacist that patients may not be aware of?

The majority of my customers have no idea of the importance of properly checking in and recording controlled substances.

How would you describe Longs Punahele?

Our pharmacy is a community driven pharmacy and personal customer care is a top priority.

How has pharmacy changed since you first started?

The prescribing of controlled substances has become more relaxed.

How do you think pharmacy will change in the future?

I believe that more will be required of the new pharmacist coming out of school in the way of using their knowledge and expertise in patient care.

What are your thoughts on the UHH College of Pharmacy?

Having the pharmacy school here in Hilo is very positive and encouraging!

Things can go from good to bad pretty quick! She started out normal (think picture on the left), some days feels like following up on picture #2, and some days it’s pretty bad and you get slug poop all over your face. –Dr. Ma
Professor and Researcher, Ken Morris By Dan Hu

An often-overlooked aspect of pharmacy is researching new techniques for the pharmaceutical industry. While much of this research is far less available to the public eye than hospital or retail pharmacy, pharmacy research drives the industry forward. Each year research pharmacy discovers new techniques, medicines, and new insights that all work to provide better healthcare. I interviewed Dr. Ken Morris, a professor and researcher at the UHH CoP to get a look behind the scenes of research pharmacy:

What projects are you involved in right now?

My main research project is part of the NSF-Engineering Research Center Grant on Structured Organic Particulate Systems with Rutgers, Purdue, NJIT, and the Puerto Rico. The overall goal is to modernize the pharmaceutical industry’s product production practices to improve quality and control cost. My part of it deals with understanding the impact of changes in the structure of crystalline particles on their mechanical strength, i.e., how they behave when smashed in a tablet press. This has implications for how well the tablets will dissolve when taken by patients. This is one of the major reasons tableted products are recalled from the market. We’re involved in a lot work to obtain funding so we’re doing research to produce “seed” data on a variety of natural products characterization projects.

How does research impact the rest of your work life?

When you combine research with teaching activities it really spurs you on to keep current and to maintain your perspective on the relevance of both. I try to use the research and industrial experience I’ve had to identify important topics to share with the students and I find that preparing for teaching and interacting with the students are often the sources of my ideas to take back to the lab.

What’s the most exciting discovery you’ve made during a research project?

This is a great question. From a personal satisfaction (i.e., a wow moment) perspective I’d say when I discovered my first polymorphic crystal form of a new drug substance. This is a little esoteric but the excitement of designing the experiment, executing it, and finally waiting for the data to come off the instrument and seeing that you’ve successfully manipulated matter at the molecular level is as fresh in my memory as if it were yesterday, but it was in the 1980s. In terms of importance, it is probably in the area of classification of crystalline hydrate and salt structures of drug molecules. The work is still widely used in the development of new drug products and I guess is still a little esoteric!

How many papers have you published?

I think my total publications number around 100, but I really don’t keep track as much as I used to. I enjoy the research process a lot more than the writing but I’ve had great students who are really responsible for most of my best publications.

What kinds of research opportunities are available to graduating pharmacy students?

The type of opportunities has shifted some over the years, but clearly clinical research is wide open and many organizations favor Pharm.D.s for clinical research associates due to their outstanding knowledge of drugs, dosage forms and interactions. Fewer go into the dosage form development area, but I think that’s a real loss for the industry, as a Pharm.D.’s knowledge of how dosage forms work coupled with the understanding of pharmacology and pharmacokinetics is a powerful combination in designing an effective dosage form.
Getting Involved: Intramurals

By Justin Arias

We’ve all gotten the emails entitled, “intramural sports”. Many
have ignored it, but some dare to answer the call, proceeding
down a path of blood, sweat, and tears to all time victory and glory.
Hidden behind this over-exaggeration are the intramural
competitive sports of volleyball, softball, and Men’s and Women’s
basketball.

All of these sports are offered
each semester and feature teams of
varying talent and ability. The UHH Athletic Department
challenges all students to build a team, and test their skill
against the best of the best. Intramural sports are about
having fun, learning values of good sportsmanship, building
friendships and even developing some friendly rivalries
along the way.

The most heated rivalry this college of pharmacy has ever seen is that of P1 versus P2
intramurals. In this unforgettable 2008-2009 intramural season, both teams had only one
thing in mind, “do work or get worked”. To recap: P1’s came through with the upset against
the P2’s in Volleyball (Fall ’08), and the P2’s swept the P1’s in Basketball (Fall ’08 and Spring ’09: Final 32-26).
Needless to say, next year should be interesting as both classes try to redeem themselves from their losses.
However, with the incoming P1 class making their debut next year, we shall have to wait and see.

As the 2008-2009 school year draws to a close, many feel summer cannot come
soon enough. A time for the books to be shoved aside, brains to be taken out of
study mode, and when relaxing can begin. However, in retrospect, time seems to
have flown by. As we get nearer and nearer to the end of our academic careers,
will our memories consist of only books and lectures, or something more. Gene
Hackman’s character said it best, “Winners always want the ball...” so no matter
what the sport, pick up a ball and have some fun. Get exercise, get out there, get
involved!

Photo thanks to Keegan Sugimoto and Stephen Wong