Dr. Stephanie Watts: Recognizing Excellence

Dr. Stephanie Watts was honored by the American Heart Association (AHA), Council on Hypertension, with the Stephanie Watts Career Development Award. According to the AHA, this award will support young investigators working in hypertension and cardiovascular research who show exceptional promise but may be currently unfunded or have limited access to extramural funding. The AHA created this award to honor the advocacy work of Dr. Watts, currently a member of the Council on Hypertension. Dr. Watts has consistently advocated for trainees associated with the Council. Due to her efforts, the Trainee Advocacy Committee was formed, which she chaired from 2005 to 2007. As a founding member, Dr. Watts helped plan and organize the Hypertension Summer School which helped many trainees become highly skilled hypertension researchers. The AHA concludes by stating “Dr. Watts is an exemplary mentor, who is avid to assist her trainees and many others to reach their career goals and become accomplished scientists who aspire to her achievements.” Learn more about the award and Dr. Stephanie Watts.

Do you remember what inspired you to be a scientist?

I was in high school chemistry, and we were reviewing the periodic table. The fact that it was organized by electrons and orbitals amazed me, and the idea that people could study and learn the rules and structure was fascinating.

What is the best part of your job?

The people and the potential of scientific discovery. I don’t give a flying fig about awards, titles, money, etc... I just love that I get to work with people who are dedicated to science and discovery. My students bring new ideas, new energy. They refresh me, really... they inspire me! They make me a better scientist.

What does having this award mean to you?

When I first found out, I cried. Pure joy! I’ve been working with the AHA since 1992, focusing on advancing trainees and crafting their experience. This incredible award is compilation of two decades of work. Additionally, for me, this confirmed that I belong. I hope this will help lead to more opportunities for other women scientists to be recognized in their field. Finally, this award recognizes my lab and its students. I wouldn’t be receiving this award without the great support I had from my team.

This award recognizes you as a mentor. Who played this role for you?

Many! Among others in our department, Dr. Gregory Fink & Dr. James Galligan have supported me throughout my journey at MSU. They helped me focus on what I can control, and to let go of what I can’t. Looking further back, my high school chemistry teacher (Ruth Poling-Kinder) made science come alive for me! The way she taught made it exciting. She also gave me my first job in science, preparing labs. Through her, I would eventually meet Dr. Steven Zumdahl. Dr. Zumdahl was my first mentor in college as I worked toward my degree in chemistry. By my junior year, I was the head teaching assistant and received a lot of freedom to teach and start lab work. I instantly fell in love with working in the lab setting, and that’s how I met my next mentor, Dr. Katzenellenbogen. The time I spent in his lab made me realize what I wanted to do the rest of my life. While I loved the lab work, I realized I wanted a different focus. After taking a course on drugs, I realized that focus was Pharmacology. I finished my undergrad in chemistry, and with strong encouragement from my mentors, I decided to pursue a Pharmacology graduate degree at IUPUI. My thesis mentor, Dr. Marlene Cohen, was the highest ranking female researcher at Eli Lilly. This was a blessing as it allowed me to do my lab work inside of Eli Lilly, which I found captivating. As a post-doc at UoFM, Dr. Clinton Webb was my mentor. This is where I really began to feel like a scientist, as I had the freedom to do my own research with out anyone looking over my shoulder.

If you weren’t a scientist, what would you doing?

I would be a baker, working in a university town. I just need the basics: people I love, things that interest me, and a sense of belonging.

Tell us something about yourself we wouldn’t know otherwise?

I was an aerobics instructor while in college!

If you could know the answer to any question, what would that question be?

Does God exist? My son, Tony, makes me think of this. I value my intellect and the ability to make choices. Not everyone is given this gift, something I remind myself about when I may be struggling for motivation. This is my life made from my choices, and I wouldn’t have it any other way!
Michigan State University played host for the 45th Annual Pharmacology Research Colloquium which took place June 1st. We had a fantastic turn-out with over 140 participants joining us from the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, and the University of Toledo. The annual event allows for students and post-docs to share their research in both oral and poster presentations. The event also features a keynote speaker, which this year was Dr. Chris Contag of Michigan State University. At the end, awards are given to the top two poster presentations and top two oral presentations. Events such as this make for a great day of science and help foster collaborations among Michigan Institutions.

2018 Pharmacology Research Colloquium Awardees:
- Nicole Michmerhuizen (UofM) 1st place oral presentation
  “Small Molecule Profiling Uncovers the Landscape of Combinatorial PI3K Inhibitor Responses in HNSCC”
- Vanessa Benham (MSU) 2nd place oral presentation
  “Mechanisms and Chemoprevention of Adiposity-Associated Breast Cancer”
- Rachel Altshuler (UofM) 1st place poster presentation
  “Protein Kinase \(\beta\) Inhibitors Attenuate Amphetamine-Stimulated Behaviors Through a Direct and Indirect Mechanism in Different Brain Regions”
- Saroj Chakraborty (UT) 2nd place poster presentation
  “A Polymorphic Variant of Secreted Phosphoprotein 2 as a Quantitative Trait Nucleotide Linked to the Heritability of Blood Pressure and Bone Mineral Density in a Gender Dependent Manner”

Our 2018 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows are working hard in the labs gaining valuable experience in research. This year we have eight undergraduates participating in the program, which started May 21st and runs through August 3rd. The program is designed to introduce undergrads to pharmacology research by placing them with a mentor who will guide their lab experience over the course of the program. In addition to the research work, students participate in weekly seminars, oral and poster presentations, and collaborative studies. Research opportunities include pharmacology, toxicology, drug development, and environmental health. Funding for the program came from ASPET, Colleges of Osteopathic and Veterinary Medicine, and the David Kahn Endowment Fund.

2018 Pharmacology & Toxicology SURF participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Major</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mackenzie Deters</td>
<td>Dr. Adam Lauver</td>
<td>Human Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Boehlert-Somohano</td>
<td>Dr. Karen Liby</td>
<td>Pre-Med, Pharm Chem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Anyaeche</td>
<td>Dr. Sing Lee</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becca Blitz</td>
<td>Dr. James Galligan</td>
<td>Neuroscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Quinn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grace Basa</td>
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<td>Biomedical Lab Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Orr</td>
<td>Dr. Stephanie Watts</td>
<td>Physiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey Ordway</td>
<td>Dr. Anne Dorrance</td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
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Undergraduate Education

For more information on our SURF program, click here.

For general information on our undergraduate program, head over to our Department website and view our “Undergraduate Education” page located under the education tab.

For questions or comments related to our undergraduate education, please email: phmtoxug@msu.edu
Dr. Anne Dorrance:
Promotion to full Professor

Congratulations to Dr. Anne Dorrance on her promotion to full Professor at Michigan State University! She joined Pharmacology & Toxicology in August of 2007 as an Associate Professor, gaining tenure in 2008. Dr. Dorrance also serves as Associate Chair for the Department and Ph.D. Program Director.

Learn more about Anne and her research.

New Grants:

- **The Cardiovascular Pharmacology of Serotonin 7 Receptor** Bridget Seitz (Ph.D. Candidate). American Heart Association. $53,688

- **New rexinoids for lung cancer** Dr. Karen Liby. Michigan Economic Development Corporation. $48,824

- **Developing new models for GNA01 disorders** Dr. Richard Neubig. The Bow Foundation. $48,000

- **Discovery of chemopreventive natural products to prevent malignancy** Dr. Jamie Bernard. Jean P. Schultz Endowed Biomedical Research Fund $30,000

New Hires:

- Matthew Giletto  Research Assistant III  Ellsworth Lab
- Wajid Bhat  Research Associate  Neubig/SPGLab
- Carlo Barnaba  Research Associate  Neubig/SPGLab
- Behirda Karaj  Research Assistant II  Neubig Lab
- Michael Sceniak Sr.  Research Associate  Atchison Lab

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Learn more about Anne and her research.

Fundraising Corner:

You can help the Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology at MSU meet its mission of advancing knowledge and training outstanding new pharmacologists and toxicologists. To permit a sustained impact on the department, we have established a Strategic Impact Endowment Fund that will provide continuing funds to support key department activities. Our current focus for this fund is for student support - student travel, our student best paper award, and stipend supplements for students who compete successfully for extramural funded fellowships. For an endowment, we need a minimum of $50,000 in the fund within 3 years, but our overall goal is $100,000. The graphic shows that we are 20% of the way to the endowment; multi-year pledges also count (contact us if this is of interest). Your gift can help us establish this long-term support for the department’s missions.

Every donation counts; no amount is too small! Our collective efforts will guarantee we have the continued funding to recruit top students in an increasingly competitive academic environment.

Blast from the past:

Do you have any questions or comments? Something you’d like to share? Send us an email! We would love to hear from our alumni and friends.

Department Email: PHM@MSU.EDU

PharmTox Quicknotes

**New Grants:**

<table>
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**Fundraising Corner:**

- **Strategic Impact Endowment Fund**
  - Goal: $100,000
  - Minimum endowment: $50,000
  - Pledged: $10,456
  - 20% towards endowment

**Connect with us on:**

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter

**Fundraising Corner:**

Do you have any questions or comments? Something you’d like to share? Send us an email! We would love to hear from our alumni and friends.

Department Email: PHM@MSU.EDU

**PharmTox Quicknotes**

- **Friday, August 10 at 6pm**
  - Silent art auction held at Urbanbeat Event Center. Proceeds go to impression 5 Science Center & PhmTox GSO

- **Saturday, August 25**
  - Pharmacology & Toxicology’s GSO department picnic held at Hartick Park

For more events, head over to the PhmTox website and take a look at our upcoming department events located on our home page.