Honors & Awards

Dr. Kandy Velazquez, a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Angela Murphy’s lab has been awarded a prestigious NIH K99/R00 grant from NIH/NCCIH entitled “The Effects of Ojeok-san on Neuro-Immune Interactions in Cancer-Induced Pain.” This is a five-year pathway-to-independence award in the amount of $949,501. Dr. Velazquez will be mentored by Dr. Angela Murphy (PMI), Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti (PMI), Dr. Daping Fan (CBA) and Dr. Richard Johnson (University of Florida).

Dr. Catroppo has been appointed to the Executive Committee, University of South Carolina Beta Chapter, Alpha Omega Alpha (ΑΩΑ) National Honor Medical Society.

Dr. Swapan Ray was invited, in recognition of his 20 years of service to the State of South Carolina, to join President Harris Pastides in the State Service Awards Ceremony on Monday, May 22, 2017, 2:00 pm, in the Russell House Ballroom.

Maria Hosseinipour, of Dr. Pirisi-Creek’s laboratory, successfully defended her Ph.D. dissertation on June 2, 2017.

Dr. Carole Oskeritzian is the recipient of a 1-year continuing renewal of a pilot grant funded from the NIH/NIGMS COBRE grant to Dr. Frank Berger, Director of the USC Colon Cancer Research Center, who serves as PI. Her project is titled “Pilot Project: Mast cell-based non-invasive screening for colorectal cancer.” This award is a collaboration with Drs. Marjorette (Marj) Peña (Dept. of Biological Sciences) and Ioulia Chatzistamou (PMI).

Dr. Angela Murphy is the recipient of a pilot project award from the COBRE (Center for Colon Cancer Research) funded by NIH/NIGMS. This work will focus on the role of the microbiome on chemotherapy efficacy and toxicity.

Dr. Swapan Ray is serving on an International Advisory Board of the Broadspec Project (Nova Scotia, CANADA), providing expertise on the pathology and molecular biology of glioblastoma, which is the most advanced brain cancer, and helping steer organization of clinical trials using novel and repurposed pharmaceuticals, alone or in combination, for its treatment.

Will Becker, graduate student in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was awarded a travel trainee poster award from the American Association of Immunologists (AAI), as well as a student travel award from USC SOM Graduate School and also from USC Provost Office to present at the Annual Meeting of AAI, Washington D.C., May 12-16, 2017.
Zinah Al-Ghezi, a graduate student in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was selected for a platform presentation and received the AAI travel award to present at the Annual Meeting of American Association of Immunologists Meeting (AAI), Washington, DC, May 12-16, 2017.

Dr. Brandon Busbee, a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was selected for a platform presentation and also an AAI travel award to present at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists, (AAI) Washington, DC. May 12-16, 2017.

Dr. Alexa Gandy was awarded an AAI travel grant for her poster submission at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington, DC. May 12-16, 2017.

Kathryn Miranda, a graduate student in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was selected for a platform presentation and also an AAI travel award at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington, DC, May 12-16, 2017.

Amira Mohammed, a graduate student in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was selected to deliver an oral presentation in a block symposium and also was the recipient of an AAI trainee abstract award at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington, DC, May 12-16, 2017.

Jackie Bader, a graduate student in Dr. Angela Murphy’s lab, was selected to present her research in a platform presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington D.C., May 12-16, 2017.

Dr. Lorenzo Menzel, a postdoc in Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti’s lab, was selected for a presentation and also awarded a NSF trainee travel stipend for the NACI Workshop 2017, Raleigh, NC.

**News & Updates**

We would like to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Jason Kubinak, Ph.D., the newest member of our Department! Dr. Kubinak joined our department from the University of Texas at Arlington where he had been a tenure-track Assistant Professor. Dr. Kubinak has published several papers in high-impact journals such as *Nature Communications*, *PNAS*, *Nature Reviews in Immunology*, *Science Translational Medicine*, *PLoS Pathogens*, and the like. Dr. Kubinak is currently a recipient of an NIH K22 Early Career Investigator Award. Dr. Kubinak’s research interests are in the area of antibody responses and microbiome. Dr. Kubinak’s hobbies are craft beer, reptiles, and gardening.

For the Academic Year 2017-2018, Dr. Catroppo continues to serve as Faculty Advisor to the Medical Student Interest Group for Pathology as well as to the Ars Humanitas Et Medicus (Arts and Humanities Medical, AHEM) Student Interest Group. He was invited to give the introductory talk to the latter group on 16 August 2017, entitled “Why The Humanities?”

Dr. Swapan Ray served as an International Expert Reviewer for the brain tumor grants submitted to the Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship funding program for strategic basic research, Brussel, Belgium, in August 2017.

Dr. Angela Murphy served as a reviewer for the National Cancer Institute Transition to Independence grant applications during June 2017.
The Oskeritzian Lab has welcomed three new members in July and August: Merlyne Jeanty, B. S., Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) scholar, will study the contribution of microRNA 34a to mast cell functions. Ross Tanis, M. S., is a rising fourth-year medical student at USC School of Medicine. Ross took a leave of absence from medical school to conduct a human research study on eczema, in collaboration with Palmetto Health-USC Medical Group and Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Chris Carlucci, B. S., is a Masters student who will study the effects of Resveratrol on eczema, in collaboration with Sajish Mathew from the USC School of Pharmacy.

Dr. Lucia Pirisi-Creek served on an NIH study section, NIDCR Award for Sustaining Outstanding Achievement in Research (SOAR) (R35) on June 22, 2017.

Dr. Mitzi Nagarkatti served as a grant reviewer for the NIH Systemic Injury by Environmental Exposures (SIEE) Study Section meeting held on June 27-29, 2017.

Dr. Angela Murphy served as a reviewer for the National Cancer Institute Special Emphasis Panel during June 2017.

Prakash Nagarkatti was invited to deliver a Plenary talk at the American Society of Pharmacognosy (ASP) 2017, in Portland, Oregon. His presentation was titled “Understanding the Epigenetic Pathways of Regulation by Cannabinoids and Their Use as Anti-Inflammatory Agents”.

Mitzi Nagarkatti was an invited presenter at the American Society of Pharmacognosy (ASP) 2017, in Portland, Oregon. Her presentation was titled “Indole-3-Carbinol Attenuates Colitis through Alterations in Gut Microbiota and Metabolic Pathways”.

Robert Startz gave an oral presentation at the USC Alumni Center on Monday, May 15, 2017. The topic was “Diseases of Famous People 2”.

**Publications**


**Presentations**

Dr. Carole Oskeritzian was invited to give a talk entitled “The Impact of Inflammation In Prostate Cancer: Prostate Mapping Revisited” at the VA Research Day, William Jennings Bryan Dorn Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, Columbia, SC, May 17, 2017.

Dr. Carole Oskeritzian was invited to give a talk entitled “Shaping the Mast(er) Cell Functions: Sphingosine-1-Phosphate And Mast Cells In Inflammation And Cancer” at the USC School of Medicine Instrumentation Resource Facility (IRF) Core Facility Symposium, Columbia, SC, June 14-16, 2017.


Al-Ghezi Z, Al-Ghetto H, Nagarkatti M, and Nagarkatti PS. Combination of cannabinoids, Δ9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), mitigate experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE) by altering the gut microbiome. Annual Meeting of American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington, DC, May 12-16, 2017.


Menzel LP, Bigger CH. Opsonic Activity and Immunohistochemical Localization of SeC3, a Complement Component C3-like Protein from Swiftia exserta. NACI Workshop 2017, Raleigh, NC.


Singh NP, Miskin AD, Singh UP, Nagarkatti PS, and Nagarkatti M. Activation of cannabinoid receptors alters the expression of miRNAs in Granulocytic Myeloid Derived Suppressor cells (G-MDSCs) and Splenic Resident Granulocytes (SRG) thereby identifying shared and unique pathways of differentiation. Annual Meeting of American Association of Immunologists (AAI), Washington D.C., May 12-16, 2017.

Bader JE, Enos RT, Velázquez KT, Carson MS, Nagarkatti M, Nagarkatti PS, Chatzistamou I, Davis JM, Carson JA, Robinson C, Murphy EA. Macrophage depletion using clodronate liposomes decreases tumorigenesis and alters gut microbiota in the AOM/DSS mouse model of colon cancer.
