

Meeting Report
SAPA-CT/UConn 2nd Joint Scientific Symposium
-Moving toward the future of Medicine

Chao Chen and Anand Gupta

The 2nd SAPA-CT, UConn School of Pharmacy and AAPS UConn Student Chapter joint scientific symposium was successfully held on May 13th, 2017 at the School of Pharmacy, the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut. The theme of this symposium centered on the future of medicine. This meeting attracted over 60 participants from both academia and industry in New England, offering a great opportunity for the collaboration between academic institutes and local pharmaceutical industries.

First of all, Dr. Xiuling Lu, the professor of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences as the organizer, gave an introduction of the meeting highlighting the podium presentation session, short talks, poster presentation as well as the career development panel discussion. Dr. James Halpert, dean of the School of Pharmacy and Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Connecticut, gave a very warm opening speech, and highly appraised the joint efforts from SAPA-CT members, UConn School of Pharmacy staffs and the UConn AAPS student' chapter. Dr. Steven Yu, the 2016-2017 President of SAPA-CT welcomed all the attendees and emphasized the mission of the organization: to provide a platform for promoting pharmaceutical research and science, idea exchange, networking, and career development.

The podium presentation session was co-chaired by Dr. Steven Yu, Director at the Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Dr. Xiuling Lu and Dr. Xiaobo Zhong, professors at the UConn pharmacy school. The symposium featured five distinguished speakers: Dr. Debra Kendall, Board of Trustees, Distinguished Professor of Medicinal Chemistry, School of Pharmacy, at UConn; Dr. Xiang Gao, Senior Director & Head of Pharmacometrics and Physiologically Based PKPD M&S, Translational Clinical Sciences, Alexion Pharmaceuticals; Dr. Juntao Luo, Assistant Professor at the Department of Pharmacology, SUNY Upstate Cancer Research Institute, SUNY Upstate Medical University; Dr. Yong Yue, Director of Computational Biology, Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals; and Dr. Qichao Zhu, Associate Professor of Genetics & Genomic Science, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Dr. Kendall's talk titled "**CB1 Allosteric Modulators: New Drugs for an Old Target**". She introduced the physiological role of cannabinoid receptor in human health, and mechanistic understanding of how this macromolecule mediates differential signaling. Dr. Gao gave a talk on "**Model Informed Drug Discovery and Development: A Rational Approach to Efficiently Accelerate Drug Discovery and Development**". He presented the MIDD concept and its use as pharmacological approaches for clinical decision-making and for increasing pharma R&D productivity. Dr. Luo gave a speech on "**Novel Telodendrimer Nanoplatfor for Therapeutic Delivery**" and focused on developing novel biocompatible polymers and the application of those in encapsulating small drugs and proteins to improve drug delivery and efficacy. Dr. Yue gave a presentation about "**Patient-Centric Genomic Data Analysis and Precision Medicine**". His focus is on the state-of-the-art of the patient-centered genomic medicine as well as future outlook in this research field. Dr. Zhu's speech was on the "**Personalized Cancer Medicine and Its**

Dependent Data Integration” and he addressed how to apply individual genetic profiles together with other relevant information for clinical cancer therapies.



Audiences were attracted by the talks from the distinguished speakers Dr. Kendall, Dr. Gao, Dr. Luo, Dr. Yue and Dr. Zhu.

Dr. Li Wang, Professor in the Department of Physiology and Neurobiology, at UConn, moderated the trainee short talk session, in which five abstract awardees including UConn graduates and postdoctoral fellow briefly presented their research findings and progress. They are Dr. Chao Chen, André O’Reilly Beringhs, Jing Li (Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences) Yi Huang (Department of Physiology and Neurobiology), and Ziyang Zhao (Department of Molecular and Cell Biology). This session covered a variety of topics from the structure-activity relationship of cytochrome P450 subfamily 2B enzymes in xenobiotic metabolism (Dr. Chao Chen), quercetin-containing drug delivery systems (André O’Reilly Beringhs) and a novel therapeutic target of liver fibrosis (Yi Huang), to phosphoantigens relevant T cell activation in cancer cells (Jin Li) and high-throughput screening for glycolytic inhibitors (Ziyang Zhao).



Dean Dr. Halpert and poster awardees

In the poster session, eighteen posters were selected for exhibition. Not only did this meeting allowed UConn pharmaceutical researchers to present their work, but also attracted many researchers from other fields and institutes. Although the session took place during the lunch break, participants showed great interests and discussed on these emerging topics.

The last session of career development panel invited our speakers and guests to share their personal experiences in advancing career. The session was moderated by the current president of AAPS UConn Student Chapter, Anand Gupta. These panelists have tremendous success in their fields of expertise either as professors (Dr. Debra Kendall and Dr. Qichao Zhu) or as executive leaders in the biopharmaceutical industry (Dr. Xiang Gao, Dr. Yong Yue and Dr. Rob Picone). Attendees actively asked questions; for instance, the choice of career path, personal traits for potential employees and so on. As the leader of the pharmacy school, Dr. Halpert also actively participated in this session, and communicated with speakers and audiences with the focus on how to match employers' needs with student's capabilities. In response, the panelists illustrated how to make a strategic plan to advance career and the importance of mentorship as well as essential personal qualities required for working in industry. It was also stressed in the discussion that a successful career requires good communication skills, persistent efforts, being flexible when needed, good team player and willingness to take the responsibilities.

Finally, Dr. Xiuling Lu gave a closing remark to conclude the event. The speakers, awardees, poster presenters, SAPA-CT executive committee members as well as AAPS UConn Student Chapter leader group were invited to take pictures of this memorable event. She said the 2nd joint scientific symposium was only possible with strong supports from all these people, particularly the student leaders of the AAPS UConn Student Chapter.

This one-day scientific symposium has yielded fruitful outcomes: full registration of over 60 attendees, brainstorming discussions of emerging technologies and challenges from the human healthcare perspective as well as building up a platform for professional networking and career development. We want to thank all the leaderships and collaborators for their constructive suggestions. We look forward to future collaborations between UConn School of Pharmacy and SAPA-CT.



Symposium organization committee members, SAPA-CT committee members and speakers