The Pharmacologist

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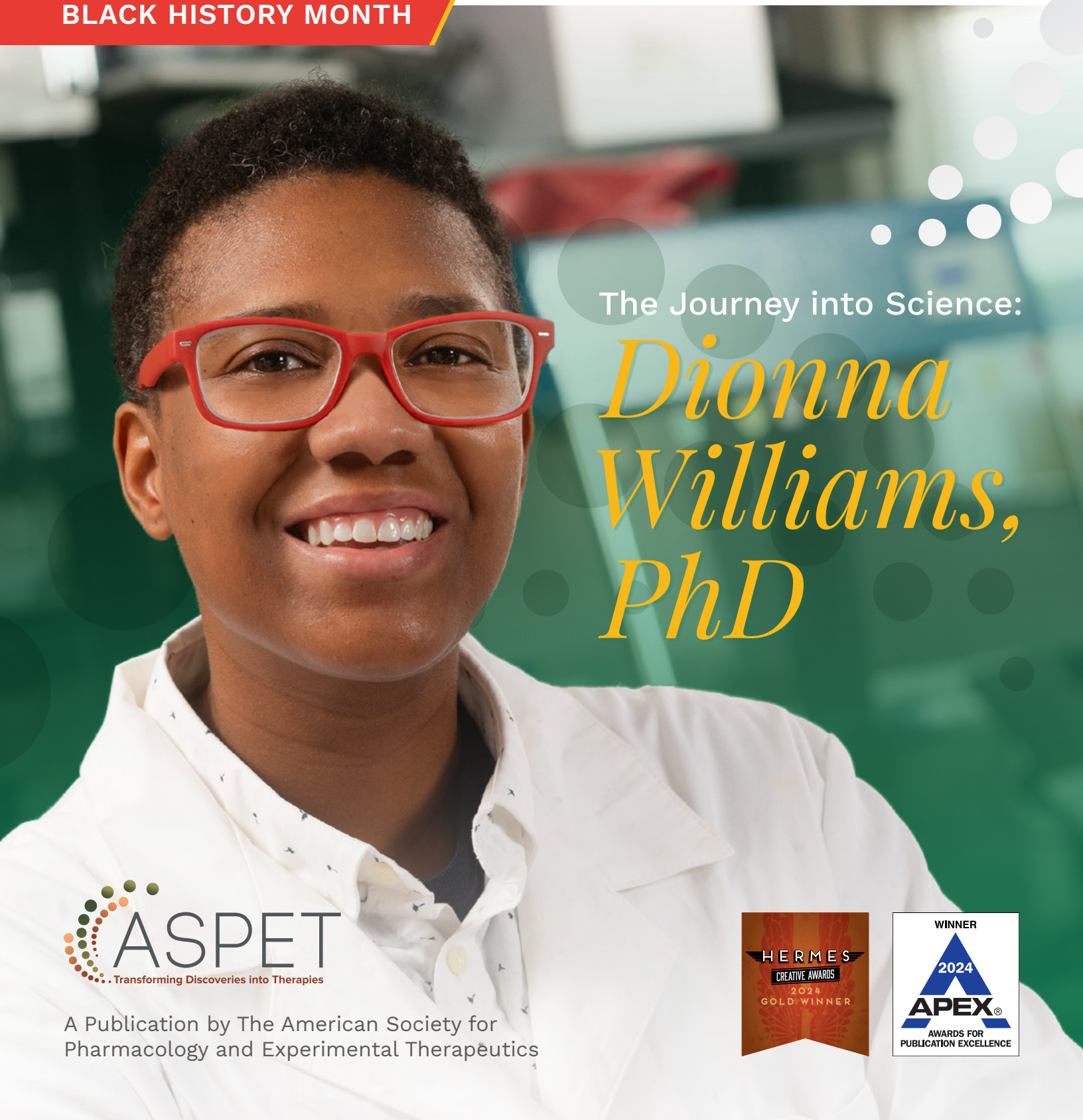
BLACK HISTORY MONTH



The Journey into Science: *Dionna Williams, PhD*

ASPET
Transforming Discoveries into Therapies

A Publication by The American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics

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In this Issue

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

On the Cover: *Dionna Williams, PhD*

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Submissions are due on the first of each month for the subsequent month's issue. Visit thepharmacologist.org. Contact: thepharmacologist@aspet.org.

Message from the President

Listen to ASPET President, Dr. Carol Beck, give updates on the recent science policy announcements, registration discounts for the ASPET 2025 Annual Meeting, the Washington Fellows program and more!

Watch the video

Visit *The Pharmacologist* companion website for digital-only features and extras. thepharmacologist.org

A Note from Dave's Desk

Reflecting on Three Years at ASPET

February 1, 2025, marked my 3-year anniversary as the Executive Officer of ASPET. It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to serve in this role for the Society. While three years is a relatively small period to lead a scientific society that was founded in 1908, it's also striking to me just how much has changed at ASPET during that time.

When I arrived at ASPET, we were still in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and I spent the entire first month as Executive Officer without being able to meet the ASPET staff in person. At the time, ASPET had only 11 employees on board due to staff turnover and the Society was preparing for what would be the last iteration of the Experimental Biology meeting (where ASPET held its annual meeting in conjunction with four other scientific societies). Three years later, with the support of the ASPET Council, the ASPET staff has doubled in size and currently work on a hybrid schedule to enable the Society to both grow existing programs and create new ones to meet the needs of our membership. Additionally, we're now preparing for the third iteration of our stand-alone ASPET annual meeting taking place soon in Portland, Ore. from April 3–6. In just three years, we've gone from holding an annual meeting where ASPET was a relatively small part of a larger event, to now holding a meeting that focuses solely on the field of pharmacology.

Three years ago, ASPET was finishing up the work of its Strategic Plan set in place in 2017. While a helpful document guiding the Society's work, it was also clear that ASPET needed to update its areas of strategic focus considering how much has changed since then. Guided by the new Strategic Plan that was established by the ASPET Council in 2023, we've added a variety of new programs and resources these past three years to meet the needs of our members: the ASPET Editorial Fellowship Program, MentorMatch, Advocacy Action Alerts, the ASPET Family Support Fund, and the Faculty Program on Inclusive Teaching are just a few of the new programs launched these past three years to support our members in alignment with our Strategic Plan.

Another major change in the past three years involves our highly respected journals program. When I arrived at ASPET, a thorough analysis of the journals program was already underway by ASPET leadership as they understood just how important ASPET's journals are to the Society and the field. As I detailed in the January 2025 issue, after self-publishing for the last 30 years, ASPET now partners with Elsevier to expand the reach and impact of our journals.

After three years with ASPET, I'm very proud of what we as a Society have accomplished so far. I can't wait to see what lies ahead in our pursuit to advance the field of pharmacology.

Dave Jackson, MBA, CAE
Executive Officer, ASPET

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Journey into Science: *Dionna Williams, PhD*

Read and share this story online
thepharmacologist.org

By Simone Brixius-Anderko, PhD and Janie McGlohon

In honor of Black History Month, *The Pharmacologist* is highlighting the journey of Dionna Williams, PhD, Associate Professor at Emory University. Dr. Williams was one of two professors at Emory to recently receive the Presidential Early Career Award, the U.S. government's highest honor for early-career scientists. She joined ASPET in 2022 and is a member of the Division for Drug Metabolism and Disposition.

An Interest Turns into a Passion

Dr. Dionna Williams' journey into science began with a pivotal decision as a teenager, one that set her on a trajectory toward a world of science. Born into a family rich in artistic talents—singing and dancing in their community church—her initial interests leaned more toward the creative arts. Yet, when faced with a choice between a performing arts school and a science magnet program during high school, she opted for science. The decision was practical at first: the magnet school offered the best education in her region, but what unfolded there sparked a lifelong passion.

In her first year at the science-focused high school in Connecticut, Dr. Williams was exposed to a world she never knew existed. The program was unique in its resources, offering high school students' exposure to routine science tools such as pipettes and experimental design. It also exposed the students to advanced research techniques such as UV-visible spectroscopy and HPLC, resources typically

utilized in college-level courses. These hands-on experiences allowed her to transition from a vague curiosity about science to a deep engagement with its possibilities.

The school's diverse student body was another eye-opener for Dr. Williams. Her peers came from varying backgrounds—whether white or black, wealthy or economically disadvantaged—and helped Dr. Williams recognize a common interest in science. Despite initially feeling disconnected from other students due to varying interests and backgrounds during her freshman year, she discovered a shared enthusiasm for science that bridged those divides. In her senior year of high school, Williams sold chocolate to fund a student exchange program to Korea, which added an international perspective to science. This experience, along with her high school experience, helped her build confidence in her scientific abilities. She went on to win a state science fair for a project on heavy metals in fish within the community, which deepened her commitment to becoming a scientist and made her transition to college smoother.

A Period of Growth and Resilience

Dr. Williams is no stranger to the hurdles of being a first-generation college student. Without family members guiding her through the complexities of financial aid or course selection, she often had to navigate these challenges on her own. Added to this were the pressures of working multiple jobs—teaching dance, being a lab tech, pursuing a work study position in the library, and participating in a drama club—while maintaining her academic responsibilities. Nonetheless, she persevered, crediting her resilience to her ability to seek out mentors and peers who could help her navigate unfamiliar territory. Her advice to students echoes this journey, "ask for help, find mentors in your peers with more experience, professors, or teaching assistants" to name a few.

After completing graduate school, Dr. Williams found herself at a crossroads between industry and academia. She attended professional development sessions at her school, but many times found herself thinking, "I don't want to do that."

Torn between academia and industry, she chose to pursue a post-doc, knowing it was necessary if she wanted to continue in academia. During her first year, she reflected on her goals, and by the second year, she took the necessary steps to secure the job she truly wanted. Dr. Williams chose academia for its scientific freedom, allowing her to pursue the questions that excite her and to be able to control her own research path.

Unlike her friends in industry, who switched projects frequently, Dr. Williams preferred to finish and answer the questions of her own projects. She also loves the academic environment, particularly mentoring students and witnessing their growth from uncertainty to confidence. Teaching, attending seminars, participating in qualifying exams, and being on recruitment committees adds fuel to her passion.

Dr. Williams' artistic upbringing has not faded into the background while continuing her academic career. Instead, it informs her scientific practice. "There's a lot of creativity in science," she explained, "the questions we ask require innovation and a willingness to think outside the box." This philosophy has even led her to take improv classes, which she credits with improving her adaptability and mental well-being.

Dr. Williams continues to embody her high school's values of accessibility and mentorship in her work today. She believes deeply in making science relatable and inclusive. "Once I understood what being a scientist involved, I wanted to make sure others could see the same potential in themselves," she said.

Her lab reflects this, where high school students collaborate with post-docs, teaching techniques and collaborating as equals. This approach embodies her belief that science thrives on humility and teamwork: everyone brings unique strengths and perspectives, making science both fun and more insightful. Moreover, Dr. Williams also advocates for reminding students that there are many fulfilling paths in science beyond academia. Whether it's teaching, writing, or industry work, she encourages them to focus on what excites them.

For Dr. Dionna Williams, science is more than a career, it's a way of life shaped by curiosity, emotional fortitude, and a commitment to making the field accessible to all. Her journey from a hesitant high school student to a leader in academic research demonstrates the transformative power of opportunity, mentorship, and resilience.

Transforming HIV Research in Minority Populations

Dr. Williams' passion for HIV research was initiated by chance. She attended a summer program in college and was assigned a project on HIV. The more she read about and worked on it, the more she realized that she had been surrounded by the damage HIV had done throughout her life.

"I grew up during the 1990s when many people were dying from HIV because there was a lack of effective medication. I remember that in high school my friend's brother had HIV. I saw him struggling over the years and how afraid people were to contract the disease. People with HIV were outcasts of society," Dr. Williams said.

During the early 1990s, there were many HIV documentaries on TV as well that she remembers vividly. She also remembers the bravery of people living with HIV to fight for recognition and more research on the deadly

Dr. Dionna Williams

virus. Especially people from marginalized backgrounds who did not receive the treatment they deserved and still today, there are many gaps in serving minority populations. This is what drives Dr. Williams in her research today, shaped by the experiences she had when she was young.

Dr. Williams' dream is that everyone receives effective HIV treatment regardless of their background. Her research particularly focuses on the inclusion of people suffering from Substance Use Disorder with a special focus on cocaine. Today's HIV treatment still focuses on patient survival and extending their lives.

The fact that HIV manifests in the brain and results in cognitive issues is largely understudied. Substance abuse frequently coincides with HIV infection.

"People suffering from substance abuse are often excluded from studies because the assumption is made that they won't take their medication anyway. But how can we learn about the interaction of HIV treatment and substance use when we exclude those populations due to prejudice and false assumptions?" Dr. Williams states that cannabinoids might have a beneficial effect during HIV treatment.

Her lab is interested in the detrimental effects cocaine consumption has on current treatments. "We always consider the liver as a main drug metabolizing organ. Our research actually shows that the brain and the blood brain barrier metabolize HIV drugs very effectively. This leads to a decreased drug efficacy in the brain."

Dr. Williams' team also found a link between CYP3A4, the major drug metabolizing cytochrome P450 enzyme, and cocaine use where cocaine can decrease or increase CYP3A4 metabolic activity and drug clearance.

"We need to consider those substances as key players in drug-drug interaction scenarios. We cannot further exclude people who use substances from studies which could show us how to effectively treat this population. They deserve individualized treatment and management of their HIV infection."

We always consider the liver as a main drug metabolizing organ. Our research actually shows that the brain and the blood brain barrier metabolize HIV drugs very effectively. This leads to a decreased drug efficacy in the brain.

Creating Personal Space

Dr. Williams is an avid martial arts afficionado actively practicing Muay Thai. She started with Tae Kwon Do during graduate school and appreciated the structure and consistency it created in her life and the benefits it has on her physical and mental health. "I just love the muscle memory which allows me to shut my brain off. As scientists, we often have a hard time to accomplish that," she said.

She also loves yoga which keeps her grounded and connected to her body. Her 4-year-old son is a constant source of joy and fun in her life. "He doesn't care if my grant proposal was scored or not. He always sees me as the best person, nonetheless. I love playing Ninja Turtles with him or stepping on crunchy leaves in the Fall. It keeps me grounded even though it is often hard to be a mom in academia."

Dr. Williams' advice is to find that unconditional love outside of science which can be found in friends, pets, parents and partners. "This love is the key to maintaining happiness outside of science and to give us perspective."

Staying grounded is particularly important in the light of Dr. Williams' Autism diagnosis. "I did not know I was Autistic until two years ago. After my diagnosis, many things in my life finally started to make sense." She often felt a disconnect between her and other people and didn't know why. She had troubles others didn't seem to have, like bright light or too much noise in a room. Although Dr. Williams often feels lonely, she draws a lot of positivity from being Autistic.

"Being neurodivergent allows me to approach scientific questions with great creativity and 'outside of the box' thinking. I can also hyperfocus on tasks which allows me to get a lot of work done within a minimum amount of time."

Learn more about the

Williams Lab

> ***Being neurodivergent allows me to approach scientific questions with great creativity and 'outside of the box' thinking.***

Autism allows her to be more compassionate for the "other" scientists from minority backgrounds because she knows what that feels like. Dr. Williams learned to combat her feeling of loneliness with compassion and kindness for others.

Dr. Williams is a rising star in the field of drug metabolism and disposition with numerous accomplishments during her early career. She is eager to change the way we approach HIV treatment. However, the legacy she wants to leave behind are her mentees, the next generation of pharmacology researchers.

"It gives me a tremendous amount of joy to help my students and trainees acquire the skills to fulfill their dreams and to watch them grow and do great things! It is always about the journey and having positivity inside and outside of the lab. I want to convey that no matter where you are coming from you can achieve your goals and have fun while doing what you are doing. Hard work, determination, persistence, and a little bit of luck eventually pays off!"

Simone Brixius-Anderko, PhD

Simone Brixius-Anderko, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy. She currently serves as the Communications Officer for the ASPET Division for Drug Metabolism and Disposition.

Janie McGlohon

Janie McGlohon is a Biochemistry PhD candidate at the University of Buffalo. She serves as the Junior Communications Officer for the ASPET Division of Drug Metabolism and Disposition.

Leadership Profile

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A Conversation with ASPET's NYSPET Founding President Saurabh Agarwal, PhD

Saurabh Agarwal, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at St. John's University, New York. Dr. Agarwal is an executive committee member of the ASPET Division of Cancer Pharmacology and a member of the ASPET Mentoring and Career Development Committee. He also serves as a member of the ASPET 2025 Conference Organizing Committee.

Dr. Agarwal is the Founding President of the ASPET Regional Chapter NYSPET (New York City Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics) in New York. Dr. Agarwal's research is focused on developing effective targeted therapeutic approaches for pediatric cancers. Dr. Agarwal published numerous high-impact and highly cited research publications and received multiple awards for his research. Dr. Agarwal is a designated Knight Commander of the St. Baldrick's Foundation and also received two Hero Awards. He serves as an Editorial Board Member and Topical Editor for multiple Journals, including PLOS One, Scientific Reports, Translational Oncology, Cancers, Pharmaceutics, Cells and Current Oncology. Dr. Agarwal works with community centers to promote pediatric cancer research and regularly participates in social fundraising events.

How did you get started in pharmacology?

My journey into pharmacology has been a winding path filled with curiosity, discovery and a steadfast commitment to making a difference. As an undergraduate studying biology and chemistry, I was captivated by how molecules could influence the human body in profound ways. That fascination became a passion during my Master's in Biochemistry, where I delved deeper into molecular pathways, laying the foundation for a lifelong dedication to pharmacology.

The pivotal moment came during my PhD at the University of Lucknow, where my research in molecular biology and genetic engineering revealed the transformative potential of pharmacology in disease treatment. This realization solidified my drive to explore therapies that could change lives. My postdoctoral fellowships in France and at Baylor College of Medicine sharpened that focus, particularly on pediatric cancers, and deepened my commitment to advancing therapeutic approaches for these challenging diseases. Today, as a faculty member and mentor at St. John's University, I focus on discovering innovative pharmacological strategies for pediatric cancer treatment and inspiring the next generation of scientists.

How did you first get involved with ASPET?

I got involved with ASPET and became a full-time member in 2022. What particularly drew me to ASPET was its unique position at the intersection of basic science and therapeutic development, which perfectly aligned with my research interests in pediatric cancer therapeutics. I started in ASPET with my active participation in the Cancer Pharmacology Division and serving on its executive committee. I also became a member of the 2025 ASPET conference organizing committee and a member of the mentoring and career development committee. I also founded a new regional chapter for ASPET in New York City, which is named NYSPET. I am currently serving as the founding president of NYSPET. This chapter covers the tri-state area and also has its own student chapter at St. John's University. With more than 60 members and growing, NYSPET aims to provide a dynamic regional platform for ASPET by fostering local engagement and collaboration.

What do you want the ASPET membership to know about you and your ideas on how to move the organization forward during your term?

I am passionate about advancing ASPET's mission to foster excellence in pharmacological research, education and collaboration. My goal is to strengthen the organization's role as a bridge between basic science and therapeutic innovation by encouraging interdisciplinary teamwork and creating more opportunities for mentorship and professional growth.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of contributing to ASPET through various roles, and I'm excited to continue building on that foundation. I see ASPET as a dynamic hub where members at every stage of their careers can connect, exchange ideas, and tackle some of the world's most pressing health challenges. To make this vision a reality, I plan to focus on initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity within our community, enhance engagement through efforts like the regional chapter NYSPET, and use modern digital tools to improve member outreach and participation. By cultivating a culture of innovation and collaboration, I hope to ensure that ASPET continues to grow as a vibrant, forward-thinking organization that empowers its members to make a lasting impact.

What has been your proudest accomplishment in your career so far?

My proudest accomplishment has been the opportunity to combine my passion for pediatric cancer research with my commitment to mentoring and supporting young scientists. A standout moment in my career was receiving the Knight Commander Award and two Hero Awards from the St. Baldrick's Foundation for my pediatric cancer research. These honors are a testament to the societal impact of my work. I am also deeply proud of the graduate students and postdocs I've mentored over the years. Seeing their accomplishments in the lab and watching them develop into independent researchers has been incredibly rewarding.

In addition, founding the NYSPET chapter in New York City has been a particularly fulfilling achievement for me. As the founding president, I've focused on building a community that provides mentorship, fosters collaboration, and helps young scientists form meaningful connections. This chapter expands ASPET's regional reach and offers a platform for emerging researchers to grow, learn, and be inspired. For me, the chance to shape the next generation of scientists through research and mentorship is one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

What advice would you give young scientists who are just starting out in their careers?

My advice to young scientists is to stay curious, resilient and open to collaboration. Embrace challenges as learning opportunities, and don't be afraid to explore new areas or ask questions. Science is full of setbacks, but resilience is key. It's the perseverance through difficulties that often leads to the greatest discoveries. Building a strong network is also essential. Surround yourself with mentors, peers, and collaborators who inspire and challenge you. These relationships will support your growth and help shape your career. Lastly, remember that a scientific career is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on long-term goals, and trust that each step contributes to your growth and impact in the field.

Member Highlights

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Margarita Dubocovich Awarded with Nation's Highest Honor in STEM Mentoring

Credit: University at Buffalo

Margarita Dubocovich, PhD, FASPET, is a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM)—the nation's highest honor for science, mathematics and engineering mentors. Her outstanding efforts to encourage and mentor the next generation of STEM innovators were honored by former President Biden.

Dr. Dubocovich is a Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology & Toxicology at State University of New York, and Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion at the University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. She is an international scholar on the brain hormone melatonin and its receptors. Building upon the early work of Julius Axelrod, she is credited with discovering and revolutionizing the field of functional melatonin receptors and pioneering the pharmacology of melatonin receptor agonists and antagonists. Dr. Dubocovich has been an ASPET member since 1983 and was designated a Fellow of ASPET in 2020. In 2022, she was awarded the Julius Axelrod Award in Pharmacology.

ASPET Welcomes New Members

Each month, ASPET welcomes new members to our home for pharmacology. This month, we recognize 66 individuals from 21 universities, colleges and companies who have joined 4,000 other members in the pharmacology community. Learn more about ASPET membership.

Brigham Young University
Cecilia S. Sanders, BS

California State University, East Bay
Gabrielle Gorostiza

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Abbie Leino, PhD

Istanbul Medipol University
Nihal Kayir, PhD

Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Science (SUNY UB)
Karishma Kedari, BPharm

Long Island University
Fatema Tasnim, MPhil

Medical College of Wisconsin
Roman Schlimgen, PhD
Tyler J. Trask, MS

Michigan State University
Samantha Musso

Queens College
Elijah Singh

Saint Joseph's University
Michael McLaughlin

Spelman College
Jakayla I. Davis

St. Mary's University
Lizana Juarez

The State University of New York at Buffalo
Prachi Sanjay Kulkarni, BPharm

Tanta University
Mohsen A. Hedaya, PhD

Tehran University of Medical Sciences
Nasrin Ghassemi Barghi, PhD

University of Alberta
Fadumo Isse, PhD

University of Arizona
Ajibola D. Adelakun, MS
Tina Akbarzadeh, Pharm
Lukas Aldrich
Paulina Anguiano, PhD
Michael A. Arowosegbe, MSc
Modesta Boateng Owusu
Sophia Buttny
Ke Chen
Tatyana S. Eydelnant, BS
Karlie E. Flader
Ishika Girdhar
Riley Haveman
Morgan Jenkins
Bhargavi S. Kelvalkar, MS
Minhyeok Kim
Paige Lenzen-Hammerel
Xintong Liu, BS
Veronica Samala
Chinwuwanuju Sampson, PhD
Devanshi Shukla, PhD
Katrina Vollmer
Blake Williams
Shuang Wu, MS
Jiawei Xu, MS

University of Arizona, R. Ken Coit College of Pharmacy
Hannah Jackson, BS

University of California, Riverside
Jonah Frazier

University of California, San Francisco
Yessica K. Gomez, PhD

University of Hull, Hull York Medical School
Vaibhavi V. Sargade, MSc

University of Ninevah
Abeer M. Abdel Rasool, PhD

University of North Carolina
Tim Qi, PhD

University of Pittsburgh
Athbah AlOwaifeer, MS
Jacob S. Cuyler, BS
Prerna Dodeja, MS
Ese S. Ekhator, PhD
Ugochukwu G. Ezigbo, PhD
Ruizhi Gu, MS
Lingyi Liu, BS
Shambhavi B. Parab, MS
Prem Shrestha, MS
Jiaojiao Zhang, MS
Hongyi Zou, MS

Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla
Luis Contreras

University of Queensland
Jingjing Xing, MPharm

University of Utah
Ping Guo, BA

University of Washington
Jade Yang, BS

Virginia Commonwealth University
Dana L. Kneisley, BS

Wake Forest University School of Medicine
Joshua Prete, BS

Washington University School of Medicine
Susruta Majumdar, PhD
Burcu Uner, PhD

In Memoriam

Share this!

Dr. Bob West (1931–2024) was a member of ASPET for over 50 years, joining in 1959. Dr. West's career as a consulting Pharmacologist-Toxicologist and Principal of Food, Drug Chemical Services, allowed him to work with domestic and foreign Fortune 1000 drug, device, diagnostic and biochemical firms. His expert knowledge and passion for the scientific field resulted in authoring numerous publications and presentations in pharmacology, toxicology, and scientific communications and regulatory affairs. Dr. West was a lecturer and seminar leader for universities and appeared as an expert witness in medical-legal cases. Additionally, he was past president of the Drug Information Association and was an active member of several other scientific organizations. He also served on the Scientific Advisory Board of several biomedical firms.

Dr. Gail Bellward (1939–2024), an ASPET member since 1974, was a Professor Emerita of Pharmacology and Toxicology in the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia. Her undergraduate teaching areas were cardiovascular and renal pharmacology, and general toxicology. Dr. Bellward's focus as a research scientist was the study of drug metabolism and drug interactions. Her career spanned nearly four decades, marked by contributions to the field of toxicology and drug metabolism.

Dr. Charles Dee Barnes (1935–2023) was a member of ASPET since 1969. Dr. Barnes completed his doctorate degree in Neuroscience from the University of Iowa and then entered a post-doctorate program at University of California in San Francisco. Afterwards, he became an Assistant Professor at Indiana University Medical School, followed by a transfer to Indiana State University as a Professor. Advancements in his career took him around the globe—from the United States to Grenada to Europe. During his career, Dr. Barnes presented many research studies and contributed to multiple books, research papers and professional seminars. He served as the Chairman of the Department of Veterinary Comparative Anatomy, Physiology, and Pharmacology at Washington State University. He retired from Washington State University in 2000, Professor Emeritus.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Authors are encouraged to submit an article proposal to JPET@aspet.org. All submissions must refer to *JPET*'s Instructions for Authors.

Advancing Pharmacotherapy for Age-Related Diseases: Bridging Treatment Gaps and Innovations for the Aging Population

A special section for an issue of *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* is accepting original research on that investigates mechanisms of age-related diseases with a focus on potential for development or implementation of new therapeutic strategies. Manuscripts can focus on:

- Conditions that may lead to accelerated aging phenotypes, with appropriate physiological and/or molecular methodologies
- Randomized placebo-controlled clinical trials
- Phase 1 clinical trials focusing on dose-dependent responses in aging and age-related diseases

Submission deadline:
May 1, 2025

Pharmacology of Next Generation Therapeutics

A special collection for an issue of *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* is seeking original research on therapeutic modalities and an accompanying award opportunity for trainees. In partnership with ASPET, the PhRMA Foundation will provide a $5,000 Challenge Award to up to five trainees for outstanding papers accepted for this special collection. Manuscripts can focus on pharmacology of novel modalities, both recent and investigational and other areas such as:

- Characterization of novel therapeutic classes
- Evaluation of new modalities in animal models
- Characterization of the PK/PD relationship for these therapeutics

Submission deadline:
July 1, 2025

Multi-Systems Pharmacology and Therapeutic Application of Adipokines and Neuropeptides in Obesity

A special section for an issue of *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* is accepting original research on obesity and its related diseases that focus on:

- Fundamental understanding of the pharmacology and pathophysiology of adipokines and neuropeptides in obesity and obesity-related diseases
- Novel therapeutic strategies targeting adipokine or neuropeptide signaling to manage obesity and related metabolic disorders

Submission deadline:
August 31, 2025

Advocacy Impact

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The Latest Policy News Affecting Scientists

In response to the recent actions taken by the federal government affecting scientists and their research, ASPET leadership released the following statements to its members on January 29th and February 11th, respectively.

Statement on Executive Orders

The American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET) leadership and staff are closely monitoring the various Executive Orders and directives that impact the work of our pharmacology community. In particular, we are monitoring the constantly evolving status of the communication freeze at NIH and the temporary pause on federal grants announced by the White House.

We understand that these are very extraordinary times for the pharmacology community. ASPET will continue to monitor these developments and update you as we gather more details on how these changes will impact your work.

The ASPET Science Policy Committee and ASPET staff are dedicated to monitoring and responding to government actions impacting the pharmacology community. If you have any questions, or would like to know how to become more involved, do not hesitate to reach out to the Department of Government Affairs and Science Policy at publicaffairs@aspet.org.

Statement on NIH Funding Cuts

In the wake of the February 7, 2025 NIH supplemental guidance that set a cap on the indirect cost rate for federal grants, ASPET launched its advocacy campaign calling on Congress to stop the cuts to indirect costs. You can participate here.

ASPET recognizes that these are unusual times and some of its members may have been told by university officials not to speak out on how the cuts could affect their universities. ASPET created an anonymous way for you to share how the cuts are going to impact you and the locality. You can participate here.

Also, in light of the continued “freeze” on funding, ASPET launched the ability for you to share the impact of the freeze on your science. Any information provided will assist ASPET in its advocacy efforts.

As these situations unfold, ASPET will continue to provide updates to members and provide ways for the ASPET community to advocate for pharmacology.

Upcoming Events

ASPET 2025 Annual Meeting
April 3–6, 2025 · Portland, OR

Advancing the Science of Drugs and Therapeutics. Join us in Portland!

ASPET 2026 Annual Meeting
May 17–20, 2026 · Minneapolis, MN

Join us in Minneapolis!

20th World Congress of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology 2026
July 12–17, 2026 · Melbourne/Narrm, Australia

We will welcome the world's pharmacology and therapeutics community to the Melbourne Convention Centre in Melbourne/Narrm, Australia.

Are You Looking for a Mentoring Match?

As an ASPET member you'll get:

- Access to member-only online platform with unique algorithm to help you connect with the right person
- One-on-one mentoring relationships for all career levels
- Goal setting tools and career resources
- Guidance for your specific professional needs

Take the next step in building your career. Sign up for MentorMatch!

On Their Way...

Share this!

Each month, the editors of three of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutic's (ASPET) journals choose who they call their Highlighted Trainee Authors. These early-career scientists are recognized for their innovative research published in *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, *Drug Metabolism and Disposition*, and *Molecular Pharmacology*. This feature showcases selected young scientists, demonstrates what drives them and reveals why pharmacology is important to them. This month we are featuring the January 2025 Highlighted Trainee Author for the journal *Drug Metabolism and Disposition*.

Chukwunonso Nwabufo

Chukwunonso Nwabufo is a PhD candidate and CIHR scholar at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, where his studies focus on pharmaceutical sciences.

"Growing up in a family involved in healthcare, I was naturally exposed to discussions about health challenges and the significant impact drugs have on patient outcomes," Nwabufo said. "During my undergraduate and graduate studies, I became particularly interested in pharmacology and therapeutics, recognizing its potential to address critical healthcare issues by improving our understanding of how drugs interact with the body."

In addition to being inspired by the people in his family, Nwabufo has been fortunate enough to have mentors who guided him through pivotal career and education moments. Having had the opportunity to work on COVID-10 treatments, he saw the critical need to understand how diseases alter drug metabolism and transport in the body.

His research focuses on understanding how diseases like COVID-19 interfere with the body's ability to process drugs by altering the function of genes and proteins involved in drug metabolism and transport. The overall goal of Nwabufo's research is to uncover how diseases impact drug processing across different tissues, identify the underlying mechanisms driving these changes, discover potential diagnostic biomarkers, and highlight the unique characteristics of vulnerable patient populations to ensure safer and more personalized treatment strategies.

While Nwabufo's plans for the near future are to expand his research to explore how different disease states, genetic factors, and environmental influences shape drug responses; his long-term career goals are focused on advancing personalized medicine, particularly by improving how we understand and manage disease and drug interaction.

Ultimately, he hopes to bridge the gap between scientific discovery and clinical application, making personalized medicine a standard in healthcare. "I envision a career where my research not only advances the field of pharmacology but also directly improves patient care by ensuring that treatments are safe, effective, and tailored to the needs of each individual."

Being published in *Drug Metabolism and Disposition* is a significant milestone for Nwabufo. Not only does it enhance his academic credibility, but it also contributes to the broader conversation around drug discovery, development and personalized medicine. "It's a reaffirmation of my commitment to conducting meaningful research that drives innovation and improves patient outcomes," he adds.

Journals Highlights

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New 2025 ASPET Journal Board Members & Updates to Publications Committee

The Publications Committee thanks these new editorial board members and all ASPET board members for their service and dedication to the Society's journals.

New Journal Board Members

Dr. Marya Ahmed

Univ. of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada

JPET Editorial Advisory Board

Dr. Taosheng Chen

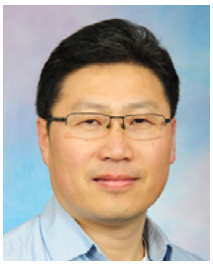
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, TN

ASPET Discovery Associate Editor

Dr. Nathan Cherrington

Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

DMD Associate Editor



Dr. Yubin Ge

Wayne State Univ., Detroit, MI

ASPET Discovery Associate Editor

Dr. Shuiying Hu

The Ohio State Univ., Columbus, OH

ASPET Discovery Associate Editor

Dr. Julie Lade

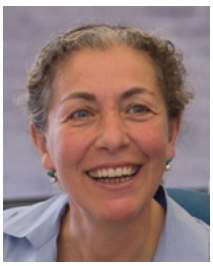
Amgen, Inc., Baltimore, MD

ASPET Discovery Editorial Advisory Board

Dr. Daniela Salvemini

St. Louis Univ., St. Louis, MO

JPET Associate Editor



Dr. Stella Tsirka

Stony Brook Univ., Stony Brook, NY

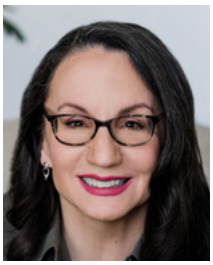
JPET Associate Editor

New Journal Board Members

Dr. Monica Valentovic

Marshall Univ., Huntington, WV

JPET Associate Editor



Dr. Stephanie Watts

Michigan State Univ., East Lansing, MI

PharmRev Associate Editor

Updates to Publications Committee

Dr. Michael Jarvis

Abbvie, Inc. *(Retired)*, North Chicago, IL

ASPET Journals Ethics Editor

Aprajita Yadav

Ph.D. Student, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, WA

Young Scientists Committee Liaison

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