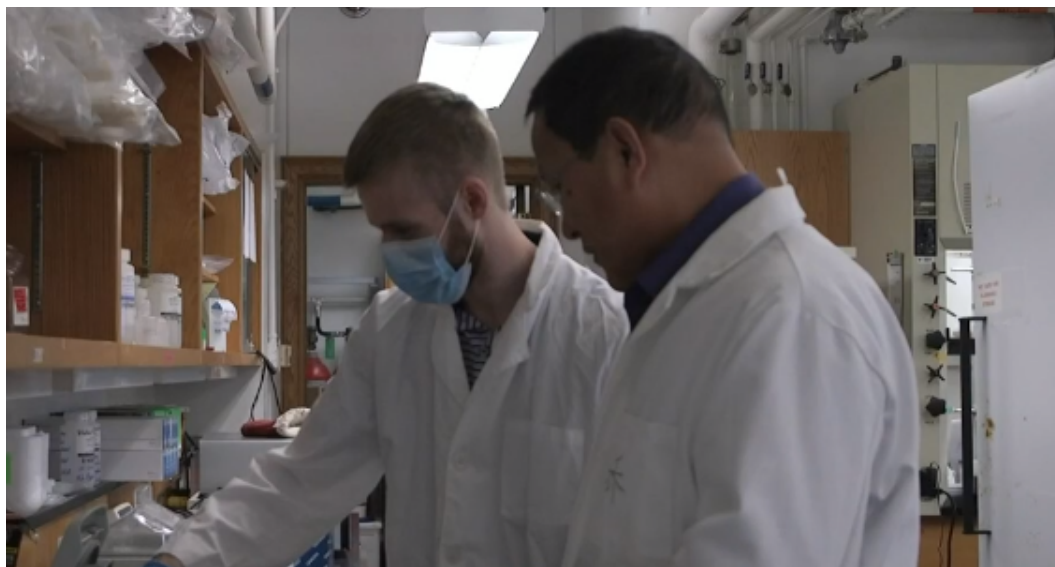


TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

BIOCHEMISTRY AND BIOPHYSICS NEWSLETTER

Liu Lab Working on New Drugs to Fight COVID-19



COLLEGE STATION, Texas – Despite what you may have heard, right now there is no drug that specifically treats coronavirus. Around the world, night and day scientists are on the hunt for COVID-19 treatments, including the researchers at Texas A&M. “So we are very close right now,” said Dr. Wenshe Liu with Texas A&M University. His team at the lab on College Station campus are in the process of developing two new

drugs they hope will treat the virus that’s wreaking havoc around the world. Liu says it’s a two-pronged approach to stopping COVID-19. One drug kills an enzyme critical to the virus. “If you block this enzyme’s activity the virus stops replicating,” said Liu. Liu says this first yet-to-be-named drug is showing the most promise. The second drug his lab is working on would interfere with a protein in the virus membrane which can block the virus entering the human cell, Liu said. He and his team hope to get at least one of his drugs into the hands of clinicians quickly.

Chemistry phase, then clinical trials

“I want to finish the chemistry part in two months and after that I really need a clinician to pick up,” said Liu. He said the reason he is developing multiple drugs is because more than one will be needed to fight the virus. “You get one drug available and after a while you see the virus mutate and it mutates it tends to be resistant against that drug and now you have to jump in and work on the second one,” said Liu.

Remdesivir Treatment

Liu and his team began working on these drugs long before COVID-19 became a problem in the U.S. In January, Liu and his colleagues were the first to recommend using Remdesivir as a treatment for novel coronavirus. Previously, in animal tests against SARS and MERS, diseases caused by similar viruses, the drug helped prevent infection and reduced the severity of symptoms when given early enough in the course of illness. At the same time that study was being published, Liu was looking ahead. “So, that was the time we decided to jump on-board and I talked to my group members and I said I want you guys to pretty much stop what you’re doing right now and start making a new drug for the virus,” Liu said.

To read more on the story and watch the video, click [here!](#)

Research Publications

Congratulations to those who have published their research in the month of March! If you would like to read more on their research, please click on the link below:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>

Graduate Students/ Research Staff/ Postdocs

Elizabeth Alvarez-Hernandez

Dr. Andrew Bigley

Heidi Blank

Ronnie Bourland

Bala Chandra Chenna

Alyssa Dubrow

Jana Gomez

Linfeng Li

Dr. Jun Liu

Zeyang Ma

Nairita Maitra

Drake Mellott

John Mosior

Dr. Yaxi Wang

Kailun Zhang

Baoyu Zhao

Faculty

Dr. Vytas Bankaitis

Dr. Robert Chapkin

Dr. Jae-Hyun Cho

Dr. Jorge Cruz-Reyes

Dr. Ping He

Dr. Pingwei Li

Dr. Thomas Meek

Dr. Michael Polymenis

Dr. Frank Raushel

Dr. James Sacchettini

Dr. Stephen Safe

Dr. David Threadgill

Dr. Ryland Young

Dr. Lanying Zeng

Dr. Xiuren Zhang



Dr. Dmitry Kurouski's Hemp Scanner



Dr. Dmitry Kurouski worked with Sam Craft, Multimedia Project Coordinator in the Division of Marketing & Communications to create this short clip explaining his lab's new hemp scanner. Watch the video below to learn more on how the hemp scanner can accurately differentiate between THC and hemp, which could help out law enforcement in the future!

<https://vimeo.com/405120791>

Dr. Jim Hu Honored at Muster



Each year, Aggies gather to celebrate Muster at over 300 locations around the world. Each of these celebrations is unique, reflecting the preferences and personalities of the communities and volunteers that step forward to host them. From the small county gatherings with barbecue and beer to the larger formal events hosted in hotel ballrooms, the observances have become as diverse as Aggies themselves. The largest Muster is held on the campus of Texas A&M University at Reed Arena. Although, with coronavirus looming over us, that didn't stop this Aggie tradition and Muster was held virtually instead on April 21, 2020. Every Aggie's name reported to The Association was called and answered "here" for during the third Worldwide Roll Call for the Absent. Continuing a tradition that began in 2018, The Association called all 1,600-plus names on the Worldwide Muster Roll and answered "here" for each in a three-hour reading. Dr. James Hu, was one of the many whose name was called during this time. Dr. Hu passed away on January 23, 2020 due to complications of liver disease.

Upcoming Events

All seminars, symposiums, sports, or large events are cancelled/postponed until further notice.

General

May 7, 14, 21, 28

Zoom Faculty Thursday Talks

May 10

Mother's Day

May 25

Memorial Day; Faculty and Staff holiday

May 26

First day of first term and 10-week semester classes

June 4, 11, 18, 25

Zoom Faculty Thursday Talks

Thursday Talks

May 7: Nicola Ayres

May 14: Cecilia Tommos

Zoom sessions will continue throughout the summer

Defenses

Details on whether it will be through zoom or in person will be announced at a later date

May 22 @ 1:00pm

Yongjin Liu's Defense

May 26 @ 10:00am

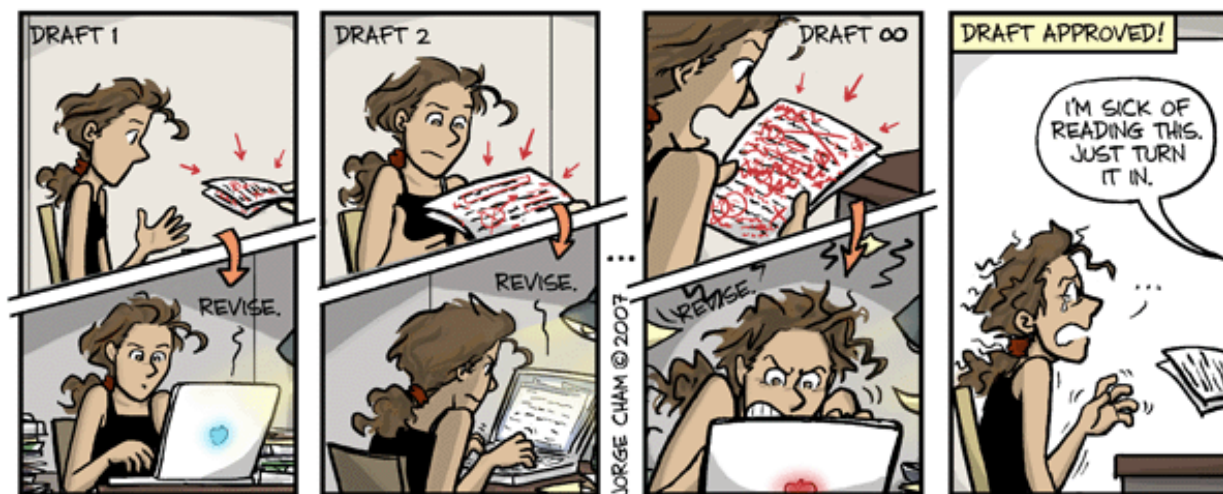
Huajun Han's Defense

May 29 @ 2:00pm

Helena Kondow-McConaghy's Defense

June 5 @ 1:00pm

Sachin Katti's Defense



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