

The Pharmacologist

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Opening Doors for Black Scientists



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In this Issue

1 Message from the President



2 A Note from Dave's Desk

4 Cover Story Opening Doors for Black Scientists



8 Leadership Profile: ASPET's Division for Drug Discovery and Development Chair Alicja Urbaniak, PhD

10 Member Highlights

14 Advocacy Impact

17 On Their Way...

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On the Cover: Health care researchers working in life sciences laboratory.

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Message from the President



Listen to [ASPET](#) President, Dr. Carol Beck, discuss ASPET 2025, ASPET 2026 session proposals, the Society's online events, and more!

Watch the video

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



A Note from Dave's Desk



Dear ASPET Members,

I write this month's note having just returned from the successful ASPET 2025 Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. The success of that meeting would not have been possible without the help of dozens of volunteers who comprised the various committees that helped with programming, poster judging, and more. The ASPET Annual Meeting is just one example of the many initiatives and programs at our Society that are dependent on the generosity of our members donating their time and expertise. During the month of April, we are pleased to share with you, opportunities to deepen your engagement with ASPET and contribute meaningfully to our collective mission by volunteering.

ASPET thrives through the active participation of its members. We are currently inviting nominations for several key positions on the ASPET Council, including President-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer-Elect, and Councilor positions. Serving in these roles allows you to influence the strategic direction of the Society, collaborate with esteemed colleagues, and contribute to the growth and impact of our field. The nomination period is open from April 1 to May 2, 2025. We encourage you to [review information about the nomination process and position responsibilities](#) and submit a nomination for one of these positions.

Beyond Council positions, ASPET offers numerous avenues for involvement:

- **Committee Memberships:** Engage with various committees that align with your interests and expertise. Committees such as the Program Committee, Science Policy Committee, and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee play pivotal roles in shaping our initiatives and programs. To find a committee position that fits your interest, please see [our comprehensive list of committees and their charges](#).
- **Division Executive Committees:** Participate in the leadership of ASPET's divisions, focusing on specialized areas within pharmacology. This involvement provides a platform to influence divisional activities and network with peers in your field. Explore the divisions and their scopes on our [Get Involved page](#).

Express your interest in a committee or division role by [contacting the respective chairs](#).

Engaging in volunteer roles within ASPET offers numerous professional and personal benefits:

- **Leadership Development:** Hone your leadership skills by taking on responsibilities that drive the Society's mission forward.
- **Networking:** Build lasting relationships with fellow pharmacologists, expanding your professional network.
- **Influence:** Play a direct role in shaping the future of ASPET and the broader pharmacology community.

We encourage you to seize these opportunities to contribute to ASPET's vibrant community. Your active participation is vital to the continued success and growth of ASPET. We deeply appreciate your dedication and look forward to your contributions.

Sincerely,



Dave Jackson, MBA, CAE
Executive Officer, ASPET

Share this!



Cover Story



Opening Doors

for Black Scientists

“Fundamentally, science is about trying to find an answer to a problem that exists and gathering sufficient data to support your hypothesis. Diversity and inclusion are vital to ensure that everyone, irrespective of where you are in the world, has access to correct data for making the best scientific decisions. So, if we want the best science it has to come from a diverse group and there is plenty of data that supports this.”

- Laura Eghobamien

Read and share this story online
thepharmacologist.org

By Tricia McCarter, CDMP, PCM
and Lynne Harris, MA, APR

[Laura Eghobamien](#) is a cellular biologist who offers expertise in cellular immunology, antibody therapeutics, and high throughput screening to small biotech companies. Eghobamien is also the founder of the [Black Medical Scientific Network](#) (BMSN) in the United Kingdom. She established it in 2020 after a close friend in the science field revealed her frustration with having to constantly prove her worth and was considering quitting the field altogether.

“I realized that a network was needed to support Black scientists that would enable them to showcase their abilities and to inspire the next generation,” says Eghobamien.

The Black Medical Scientific Network

The mission of BMSN is to increase the representation of Black scientists in the medical and scientific sectors. The organization finds ways to increase this visibility mainly through working with established life science conferences where attendance of Black scientists is often low. They work with conference organizers on ways Black scientists can contribute to the programming as a speaker, panelist, or lead a workshop. If rewards or honorary fellowships are being awarded, they put forward recommendations of Black scientists with the right skillset for consideration.

BMSN also has an informal mentoring scheme to support other Black scientists on their career path. With Eghobamien at the helm, the team includes Pamela Banana Sweeney, Industry Lead/Social Media Lead; Nana-Jane Chipampe, Academic Lead/Social Lead; Emmanuel Adiohwo, Student Lead; Elizabeth Amedjou, Membership Lead/Student Lead; and Lawrence Nyalemegbe, Outreach Lead.

Obstacles Facing Black Scientists in the United Kingdom

Eghobamien says there is vast data to show that Black researchers are under-funded and recently there has been progress made by many research councils to allocate funds specifically targeted at Black researchers.

“Although this change is welcomed, often these funds are limited and certainly not enough for the number of applicants who apply for these funds,” she explains. “It’s a highly competitive process often leaving many students with no access to funding.”

Often, Black scientists do not feel supported when it comes to career progression to senior leadership roles, and often there is no clear path to support or many hurdles to overcome.

“Those who are the decision makers at higher education institutes hire those they know, and very often Black scientists are not given the opportunity as they are unknown to these decision makers,” Eghobamien says. Coupled with this is a feeling of isolation and exclusion



that many Black scientists experience in their work environments. She says that even though data shows there is huge inequality, there is little action by those with the power to change it.

“If there were policies in place to fine institutions and companies who do not take deliberate action to ensure that Black scientists can contribute to science in an equitable way, these barriers will continue to exist.”

From Personal Tragedy to Bold Action

Eghobamien’s fascination with science began at age 11. “I always thought doing my practical chemistry classes were super cool,” she says. When Eghobamien was 14, her mother almost lost her life while giving birth to her sister. She had pre-eclampsia, a life-threatening complication in pregnancy.

“I later understood that this condition was due to a breakdown in immune tolerance. Furthermore, the concept of immunological tolerance was one that I still find intriguing and sparked my interest in immunology.”

By the time she was 21, during her undergraduate degree, she lost a close aunt to pancreatic cancer. This left Eghobamien disheartened and fueled a huge urge to be able to pursue a career in science that would find a cure for cancer and her interest in drug discovery and pharmacology.

As her career progressed Eghobamien also worked as a STEM role model at schools.

“My involvement in schools started over a decade ago when I participated in the Women of the Future conference at the John Innes Centre in Norwich organized by Dr. Samantha Fox. I volunteered to be one of the role models for this event. This was a 1-day conference where over 500 Year 10–11 girls would have the opportunity to interact with female scientists and hear about their careers.”

Eghobamien says it was an exhilarating experience engaging with so many young girls and inspiring them about careers in science. Since then, she has visited a number of schools giving talks and advice about careers in science.

[BMSN](#) is now five years old, and she hopes to be able to reach and support as many Black and underrepresented scientists across the globe to ensure their work is visible to as many people as possible. Eghobamien wants to ensure that at every major scientific meeting Black scientists can contribute equitably, are well represented, and that Black scientists are adequately rewarded for their scientific contributions.

“As we grow, we want to be able to provide workshops and collaboration with other organizations who share our passion to support Black scientists.”

Portraits of Black Female Scientists

Eghobamien's chance meeting with a photography lecturer at an outreach event in Norwich led to the development of the idea for the [Portraits in Black Female Scientists project](#). They spoke about representation and images, and she thought it would be wonderful to capture images of Black scientists. In 2023, the theme of the UK Black History Month was titled 'Saluting Our Sisters' and together they jumped at the opportunity to portray Black female scientists and showcase contrasting imagery of what a scientist looks like in today's world.

The result is an ongoing project featuring early-career scientists in particular to inspire those who are thinking about a career in science and to show that it is possible to attain a leadership position in science. The project was showcased at an exhibition at Storey's Field Centre in Cambridge in collaboration with the Cambridge African Network. **Here are some of the Black female scientists from the inaugural project.**



Nana-Jane Chipampe, PhD is a Histopathology and Imaging Specialist at the Wellcome Sanger Institute. She earned her PhD from Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

Q What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A My scientific focus lies in the examination and analysis of human tissue biopsies. I utilize my expertise in Histopathology to investigate cellular structures and disease processes under the microscope. Histopathology is fundamental to understanding disease at a cellular level, providing crucial insights into diagnosis, prognosis, and patient driven treatment strategies. Through advanced microscopy imaging techniques and tissue analysis, my work supports academic research groups in generating high-quality data that can drive scientific discovery and improve patient outcomes.

Continued on page 20



Leadership Profile

Share this!

A Conversation with ASPET's Division for Drug Discovery and Development Chair Alicja Urbaniak, PhD



Alicja Urbaniak, PhD is an Instructor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Dr. Urbaniak has been an ASPET member since 2016 and currently serves as the Chair of the

Division for Drug Discovery and Development.

How did you get started in pharmacology?

My path into pharmacology began towards the end of my graduate program. Throughout grad school, I focused primarily on synthesis of bioactive compounds. In the final year of my PhD work in chemistry and health sciences, I had an opportunity to broaden my research into drug discovery and development with a focus on translational research. Beginning with an internship at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, I developed an interest in oncology research which led me to focus on identifying and characterizing novel therapeutic agents, including naturally derived compounds and their analogs, for cancer treatment. Over time, my work has expanded beyond drug discovery to also include regulatory science and precision medicine.

How did you first get involved with ASPET?

I first became involved with ASPET during graduate school while completing a fellowship from the Kosciuszko Foundation at the

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. My former mentor sponsored and introduced me to the Society, and thanks to a travel award, I was able to attend my first Experimental Biology meeting in Chicago in 2017. As my research expanded into pharmacology and translational science, ASPET provided an excellent platform to connect with like-minded scientists, share research findings, and stay informed about cutting-edge developments in the field.

Over time, my engagement with ASPET grew, leading to my roles on the Partnerships Committee and the Executive Committee of the Division for Drug Discovery and Development (DDD), where I currently serve as Chair. In this role, I aim to foster collaborations and support innovative research. ASPET has provided me with numerous opportunities to expand my network and develop both as a researcher and a leader, and I am grateful for my decision to become more actively involved.

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 want ASPET members to know that I am deeply committed to fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment that advances drug discovery and pharmacology by supporting our members. Previously, I served as DDD's Communications Officer for three years, where I worked to increase the visibility of the division through social media and highlight our member's accomplishments. We continue to look for opportunities to increase membership exposure and networking opportunities.

As Chair, I want to support early-career scientists by increasing the visibility of their research within the DDD division and promoting structured mentorship opportunities at ASPET. I want to optimize our budget to improve the support and recognition we provide to our members. We are also striving to strengthen the collaboration amongst divisions by promoting cross-divisional networking opportunities. Finally, by the time I finish my duties as Chair, I plan to establish structured operational guidelines for key leadership positions within the division to ensure continuity and effectiveness.

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

My career has delivered many wonderful and rewarding moments. Receiving the KL2 NIH Mentored Career Development Award and the Arkansas Breast Cancer Research Program Pilot Grant were significant awards that helped propel my research. Also, every publication has been a meaningful success that contributes toward a body of work that I am proud to author.

In addition to the research I'm involved with, I am very happy to be a contributing member of the scientific community based on my editorial work with journals and my commitment to scientific societies. I am a member of the

editorial board of the *Journal of Biochemical and Molecular Toxicology* and as Social Media Coordinator for *Pharmacology Research & Perspectives*. I have also served as an ad hoc peer reviewer for over 35 scientific journals.

Some of my proudest moments have also been on a different bench. In 2013, I won a bronze medal at the International Powerlifting Federation Bench Press Championships. I've also won four Polish National RAW Bench Press Championships titles, two Polish National RAW Powerlifting Championships, and set a Polish national record in powerlifting bench press.

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

My advice to young scientists is to work hard, stay curious, and embrace persistence and collaboration. Science is a long journey, and setbacks are inevitable, but each challenge presents an opportunity for growth. Seek mentorship from experienced researchers while also building a network of peers who will support and inspire you. Be open to interdisciplinary approaches—many breakthroughs happen at the intersection of different fields. Finally, never underestimate the importance of communication skills, whether in writing grants, publishing papers, or presenting research.

Contribute to *The* Pharmacologist

ASPET's award-winning flagship magazine *The Pharmacologist* seeks writers interested in contributing human interest and science stories focused on pharmacology. Contact us at thepharmacologist@aspet.org. Please include links to writing samples.



ASPET's Division for Pharmacology Education Inducts New Fellows into the Academy of Pharmacology Educators

ASPET congratulates the three new Fellows inducted into the [Academy of Pharmacology Educators](#) this year by the [Division for Pharmacology Education](#). The Academy of Pharmacology Educators was established in 2010 to recognize individuals who have made exemplary contributions to pharmacology education in one or more of the following areas: student-teacher interaction, innovative contributions, scholarly endeavors, professional development, and service.

It is a privilege for the Division for Pharmacology Education to add these scholar-educators as Fellows of the Academy of Pharmacology Educators and appreciates their many contributions to the discipline.

Meet the 2025 Fellows:



Dr. Helmut Gottlieb is a Professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW), Feik School of Pharmacy. He also teaches pharmacology to optometry and physical

therapy students at UIW and at the University of Texas Health Science Center respectively. Dr. Gottlieb also taught Doctor of Nursing practice and medical students. Over the years, he has received several teacher of the year awards,

provost teaching award, and the presidential teaching award. He has been an active member of the ASPET Division for Pharmacology Education and a member of the executive committee (2011–2017 and 2019–present). Dr. Gottlieb maintains an active research lab where he has trained more than 48 students (undergraduate, pharmacy, physical therapy, graduate and medical students). He has published in several educational journals and is a co-author in one of the chapters on *Foyer's Principles of Medicinal Chemistry*.



Dr. Kelly Quesnelle is a Clinical Professor and Chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville, where she leads the faculty responsible for the foundational science

curriculum. Dr. Quesnelle is the Executive Director of the Medical Education Research Incubator in Greenville, and she has previously held other leadership positions in medical education including Course Director and Curriculum Committee Chair. She serves on the executive committee of the International Association of Medical Science Educators and is a member of the Council of Faculty and Academic Societies at the Association of American Medical Colleges. Her latest book, *Perspectives on Leadership in Health Professions*

Education, will be part of the International Association of Medical Science Educators Manual Series and is scheduled for publication in 2025.



Dr. Monzurul Roni is a Teaching Associate Professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria, where he serves as a Pharmacology Thread Director and a Course Director of the Preclinical

Curriculum. Dr. Roni has been a member of ASPET for 14 years and has served on the executive committee of the Division for Pharmacology Educators and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee. He is also a national faculty member of the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners, an editor for several international journals, and a member of the publications committee of the International Association of Medical Science Educators. Dr. Roni's research focuses on curriculum innovation and assessment in medical education.

ASPET Welcomes New Members

Each month, ASPET welcomes new members to our home for pharmacology. This month, we recognize 61 individuals from 34 universities, colleges and companies who have joined 4,000 other members in the pharmacology community. Learn more about [ASPET membership](#).

ALA BioPharma Consulting

Thomas Hudzik, BS, PhD

Allegheny College

Josh Salisbury

Baylor University

Mariana Dejeux, MS

Daydarou Omid Company

Mohammad Hossein Hosseinzadeh, Pharm D

Federal Medical Centre Ebute Metta, Lagos

Jamiu Ogunsakin, MD, MBBS, MSc

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Mariana Alves dos Santos Machado

Iowa State University

Sina Dehestani, MS

Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine

Ethan Schlegel, BS

K S Hegde Medical Academy

Aishwarya Wodeyar, MD

Legal Bridge Partners LLC

Onojah John Enema, PhD

Long Island University

Ekaterina Gurariy, MS

New York University Langone Health

Richard Tsien, PhD

Northeastern University

Rachana Salvi

Northern Michigan University

Nathaniel Donahue, BA

Andrew Donar, BS

Ian Grochowski, BA Chem

Sadie Kernan, BS

Dillon Shekoski

Ohio State University

Sergey Lopatin

Oregon Health & Sciences University

Adam Oken

Oregon State University

Daniel Simchuk, MS

Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Teralan Matthews, BS

Revolution Medicines Inc.

Ben Maldonato, PhD

University of Arizona

Christopher Cartmell, PhD

University Central del Caribe

Iris Salgado Villanueva, PhD

University of California San Francisco

Zilong Dang, PhD

Jia Yang, PhD

University of Findlay

Harbinder Dhariwal, PharmD

Elizabeth Frazier

Charity Gottfried, DPharm

Matthew McAvoy, BS

University of Florida

Joon Paek

University of Michigan

Vikram Bagchi, BS

Arnaz Bharucha, MS

Sara Deschaine, BSc

Krista Goerger, BS

Yena Jin, MS

Kassidy Jungles, BS

Behirda Karaj, MPH

Oanh Luc, MS

Yuchen Luo, MPharm

Jacob Reeves, BS

Siri Sampagaonkar, MS

Claire Shudde, BS

Livia Stanger, BA

Elise Tahti, BS

An-Yun Teng, BS

James Teuber, BS

Brian Tran, MS

Jason Witek, PhD

Sam Wu, BS

Michael Young, BS

University of Nevada Reno

Mitchell Omar, PhD

University of Nigeria Enugu Campus

Amarachukwu Molokwu, BSc

University of Sao Paulo,

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Discussing Science. Discovering Cures.

Interested in Being a Guest Writer?

ASPET's Pharmacology Corner blog seeks contributing writers on a rolling basis.

Pharmacology Corner is a dedicated space where pharmacology experts can discuss issues that affect them professionally and personally.

The blog connects science and society through various pharmacology disciplines.

Contact us at pharmacocorner@aspet.org.



Upcoming Events

Canadian Society of Pharmacology and Therapeutics 2025 Annual Meeting

June 2–5, 2025 · Vancouver, BC

This year's theme is "From the Sea to the Sky: Unlocking the Mysteries of Drug Action." Come join us in Vancouver for stunning ocean and mountain views, vibrant dining, and waterfall walks—a perfect blend of science and scenery!

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



Advocacy Impact

Share this!



ASPET representatives on Capitol Hill

ASPET Visits Capitol Hill to Support Science Funding During Unprecedented Time

By Marah Wahbeh, PhD

An ASPET contingent gathered in Washington, D.C. in late February for this year's Hill Day for meetings with congressional staff on the importance of biomedical and pharmacology research funding. The group, consisting of the 2024–2025 ASPET Washington Fellows, members of ASPET's Council and Washington Fellows alumni, discussed the crucial need for sustained and predictable federal funding for scientists.

During these meetings, ASPET member representatives specifically highlighted the need to fund the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to at least \$53 billion for the 2025 fiscal year. Further, while acknowledging that it would not be ideal for a year-long continuing resolution, ASPET also asked for a \$500 million anomaly for the NIH to be included.



ASPET met with Ola Nesheiwat Hawatmeh from Rep. Victoria Spartz's office to discuss the impacts of NIH funding on the constituents of Indiana.

ASPET members discussed the negative impacts of the federal shutdowns, long-term continuing resolutions, and sudden funding policy shifts, such as the NIH Facilities and Administrative (F&A) cost cuts. Overall, the fellows, alumni and council members participated in 25 meetings, 15 in the Senate and 10 in the House with both Democrat and Republican offices of 11 states. Despite this Hill Day coming at an unprecedented time, we at ASPET know that now more than ever, the support for predicted and sustained NIH funding is needed most.

Two of the 2024–2025 fellows, Elena Levi-D'Ancona and Hershey Kondeti, [documented their Hill Day experience](#) on ASPET's LinkedIn. They

shared that they had an incredible experience [meeting with congressional staff](#) of elected officials to advocate for sustained [NIH funding](#) and highlighting the [harmful impact of capping F&A costs](#). They expressed how the opportunity to do so was empowering and rewarding.

Other fellows shared that they really enjoyed putting together their story, learning how to engage with different offices, sharing their work, and the impact of NIH funding on them. As the next generation of scientists and science advocates, the stories the fellows shared with staffers on how NIH funding supports their research and the negative consequences of that funding potentially being taken away, were



Amanda Ifft, Elena Levi-D'Ancona, and Matthew J. Robson met with William Seabrook from Rep. Debbie Dingell's office to discuss the effects of cutting NIH funding in Michigan.

powerful in showcasing that federal investments in science are tightly linked to the future of healthcare, drug development, and our workforce.

All staffers, regardless of the partisanship of their office, were receptive to hearing stories from constituents and scientists. Many expressed support for NIH and science funding as well as their awareness of the impact of the F&A cost cuts, indicating previous advocacy efforts from scientists on this topic. Some staffers expressed reservations over the federal budget. The fellows emphasized local impact of NIH funding on the institutions in the elected officials' home states and shared documents to show the direct impact of returns on investment in biomedical research.

If you are interested in participating in future advocacy work with ASPET, contact the government affairs department at publicaffairs@aspet.org.



Marah Wahbeh, PhD

Marah Wahbeh, PhD is the Manager, Government Affairs & Science Policy at ASPET. She received her PhD in Human Genetics and Genomics from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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**

On Their Way...

Share this!

Each month, the editors of three of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (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 March 2025 Highlighted Trainee Authors.



Pooja Hegde

“Ever since I was a child, understanding how drugs worked and why certain drugs and severe side-effects while other drugs didn’t always puzzle me,” says Pooja Hegde, a Drug Metabolism-

Pharmacokinetics (DMPK) Advisor. This curiosity laid the foundation of her academic journey.

Hegde started her undergraduate studies to become a pharmacist to get these answers. Then to understand drug mechanisms and drug interactions, she pursued her graduate studies in medicinal chemistry, gaining more understanding of the field and her interests leaning more toward DMPK. Her post-doctoral training was focused on metabolism and transporter mediated drug-drug interactions, which helped put the mechanistic basis of drug interactions and adverse reactions in perspective.

When asked how she hopes her work will impact the field of pharmacology, she says, “While the preclinical DMPK field is constantly developing, there are still a few challenges with regards to drug metabolizing enzymes and drug-drug interactions (DDIs). I hope my research will help address a few gaps in the field and will improve the in-vitro to in-vivo correlation abilities to

have a better understanding of risk prediction and to enhance screening of compounds for DDIs early in the discovery stage.”

From a career standpoint, Pooja’s long-term vision is to be able to successfully promote the discovery and development of at least one drug that has clinical potential to combat diseases with a mild toxicity profile.

For Hegde, [*being published*](#) in *Drug Metabolism and Disposition* is a great privilege. Her postdoctoral research resulted in three different manuscripts, all of which have been published in ASPET journals. “I have been very fortunate for the opportunity to present my work on such a platform where other esteemed scientists in the field share their remarkable science. From spending days looking through ASPET journals for understanding the scientific progress and gaps in the field to contributing to this wonderful journal, I feel like I have come a long way in my career.”



Ana Catya Jiménez-Torres

“I fell in love with Biology when I was in high school,” says Ana Catya Jiménez-Torres, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the

University of South Carolina. While studying for her undergraduate degree, she participated in a “Scientific Summer” program, and that’s when she knew that she wanted to pursue research.

Jiménez-Torres’ passion for science propelled her to apply and win various national and international internships. Early in her career, she had the opportunity to conduct research in different labs and connect with expert scientists who became mentors who always encouraged her to reach her professional goals.

When she started her doctoral studies, her interest in neuropharmacology and neurotoxicology increased. In 2020, she obtained her PhD in Toxicology from the Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados at Mexico City. Her graduate research contributions focused on the regulation of glutamatergic neurotransmission in the brain-liver axis in liver disease. After that, she continued expanding her knowledge in neuroscience field, with a main interest in developing compounds with therapeutic benefits for a specific population, HIV-1 positive patients.

“The basis of my current research is identifying specific compounds that interact with unique sites on the dopamine transporter, diminishing the Tat-dopamine transporter interaction, thus the dopamine transporter may back to physiological functions promoting the attenuation of neurocognitive deficits in HIV-infection. The importance of this research addresses the identification of potential therapeutic agents to normalize dopamine dynamics in the brain to treat neurocognitive disease in HIV patients.”

Over the last seven years, Jiménez-Torres has built her knowledge on how different drugs may alter synaptic neurotransmission, the molecular mechanism of action and underlining specific targets to provide new insights on promising therapeutic interventions. Ultimately, her long-

term goal includes becoming an independent researcher and developing a comprehensive understanding of emerging knowledge about the role of cerebellar neurotransmission on drug rewarding and seeking.

According to Jiménez-Torres, [being published](#) in a scientific journal, like *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, is an amazing platform to make findings known to the world.



Victoria Saca

Victoria Saca is a 5th year PhD student in Tom Sakmar’s Lab at Rockefeller University—where she’s working on G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) and proteolysis targeting chimeras (PROTACs)—and a member of the Tri-Institutional PhD Program in Chemical Biology.

While she has always been interested in science, it was during a summer undergraduate research program with Dr. Travis Bethel at Providence College that made Victoria realize that she loved being in the lab. That passion first led her to participate in a research program in Samie Jaffrey’s Lab at Weil Cornell Medicine, where she worked to discover self-modifying ribozymes in the pursuit of self-modifying RNA-tag that would use endogenous substrates.

When Saca started her thesis research during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, work was still restricted, and they had a hard time getting reagents and supplies like microtiter plates. But as things started to take off, she realized that her work might have an impact on PROTAC drug discovery and therapeutics. For Victoria and her team, showing the feasibility of PROTAC technology to target a large family of proteins such as GPCRs has been an exciting and rewarding project.

“I hope that my research helps to further expand the use of PROTAC technology to target GPCRs and other membrane proteins. Although targeted protein degradation methods (TPD) have been applied to a few GPCRs, my work suggests that TPD methods might be useful more broadly to suppress constitutively active GPCRs, for example.”

Later this year, Saca plans to defend her dissertation. From there, she hopes to pursue additional postdoc training and a career in

drug discovery, maybe at an innovative start-up. Her goal is to leverage chemical tools and technologies to develop new drug discovery programs.

For Saca, “it is an honor to publish in *Molecular Pharmacology* alongside numerous other incredible scientists. Throughout my PhD, I have read many articles from ASPET journals as well as attended an ASPET conference, and I am excited to contribute to this scientific community, which is so vital for drug discovery.”

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



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



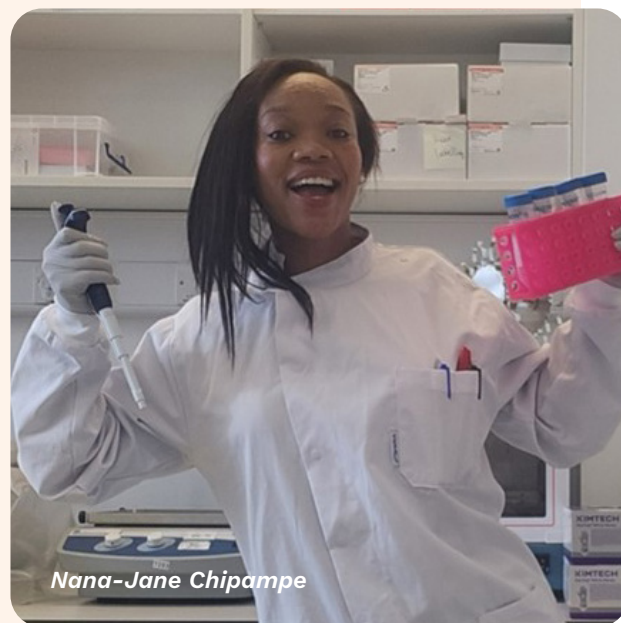
During my PhD, I collected patient tissue samples post radical cystectomy surgery, and engaged directly with bladder cancer patients, gaining firsthand insight into the symptoms and challenges they face. These experiences reinforced my commitment to applying scientific histopathological techniques to enhance diagnostics, develop targeted therapies, and communicate findings to wider audience. All with the ultimate goal of improving lives.

This field is important to me because it bridges the gap between research and real-world, patient-focused clinical impact. In addition, knowing that my work enhances diagnostic accuracy and informs effective, personalized, patient-focused treatment strategies, provides me with a profound sense of daily fulfillment.

Q How did you become interested in science?

A My interest in science was sparked at an early age, influenced by both my family and formative experiences. My mother, a retired nurse and health visitor, instilled in me a deep appreciation for healthcare, and my intellectually curious father played a significant role in nurturing my love for science. His conversations about geology, healthcare and physics sparked my fascination with the human body, the natural world, and the principles that govern it. Coupled with my mother's background in healthcare, these discussions created a rich environment where curiosity and learning were encouraged.

Privately educated at Leeds Girls High School in the UK, I was fortunate to have access to a curriculum that included human biology, along with the benefits of smaller class sizes and personalized tutoring. This early exposure to scientific concepts, along with a unique work experience opportunity within a histopathology department, through my pathologist neighbor, solidified my desire to deepen my understanding of the human body. This passion led me to pursue a degree in Biomedical Sciences at Durham University, UK and ultimately, a career dedicated to research and scientific discovery. Each step in my journey reinforced my commitment to science, ultimately leading me to a career in scientific research.



Q

How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A

Being featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project is an incredible honor. This initiative not only celebrates the contributions of Black women in science but also serves as an important platform to inspire future generations. Representation matters and seeing diverse role models in STEM can encourage young scientists to pursue their ambitions with confidence.

For me, this recognition is both humbling and empowering. It acknowledges the dedication and perseverance required to navigate a career in both science and research, while highlighting the vital contributions of Black female scientists to scientific advancement. I hope that by sharing my journey, I can help break down barriers and encourage more aspiring researchers to follow their passions in science and academia.

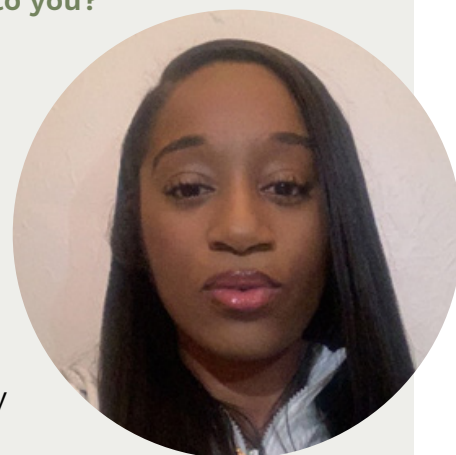
Melissa Jade is pursuing her PhD in biophysics at Kings College London, UK.

Q

What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A

My research focuses on computational material modelling small molecule drugs observing their permeability in gut lipid membranes and surfactant micelles. My PhD is important to me because I feel the value of being certified the accolades and perks of being a doctor is different especially coming from a low economical background. But most importantly I get to contribute to research and many generations after me will be able to see the work that I have done. I am honestly grateful to have done this PhD. I plan to continue my career in academia or become a research software engineer.



Q

How did you become interested in science?

A

My interest came from my engineering bachelor's degree and completing my masters in biomaterials and tissue engineering. I love materials and my masters open my eyes to more of a biological perspective of materials.

Q

How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A

I feel proud and somewhat grateful that people that look like me can see we are also in this sector.



Sophie Martin, PhD works in academia as a Research Fellow. She earned her PhD in Artificial Intelligence for Medical Imaging from the University College London, UK.

Q What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A My research focuses on using artificial intelligence for the advancement of healthcare such as the early detection of dementia from brain scans. I am particularly interested in their application in real-world settings, explainability, fairness and robustness. I believe that if the future is to be revolutionized by AI, then we need to make sure that it will be of equitable benefit to everyone.

Q How did you become interested in science?

A I have always enjoyed learning, and science is essentially the never-ending process of that.

Q How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A I feel honoured to be included, and hopeful that young people will eventually see themselves reflected in those interested in and pursuing scientific careers.

Martha Mercy Mulongo is a Research Assistant at the Wellcome Sanger Institute in the UK. She earned her Bachelor of Science technology degree in Biology from Kyambogo University in Uganda.

Q What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A My scientific interest is research into pathology, more so the nematodes. Nematodes are of great economic importance assisting with soil aeration and biodiversity. Additionally, they are parasitic affecting food security, and cause disease in animals, such as sheep leading to a reduction in production.

Q How did you become interested in science?

A While in high school I became interested in science as I enjoyed practically carrying out experiments, and I performed well. Science is a way of discovery, questioning and finding answers to some existing questions and answers. I love science for the diversity in careers. As a Research Assistant currently working in the Tree of Life program at the Wellcome



Sanger Institute, I prepare high-quality genetic material to understand the diversity and evolution of nematodes in our environment. This enables us to understand dynamics of genetic change, understand parasitism and the diversity on earth, a key branch of the Tree of Life. This is an important discipline, as there are lots of existing tiny microorganisms that are non-described.

Q How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A Being featured in Portraits of Black Female Scientists project gives me confidence in what I do, creating networking opportunities with like-minded people.

Jennifer Ofoedu works as a Scientist at Valink Therapeutics focusing on the development of Antibody Drug Conjugate (ADC) Therapeutics for treatment of cancer in the UK. She earned her Master of Science degree in Physiology and Pharmacology at King's College London.

Q What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A Cancer research because I've always been interested in therapeutics. Before I started my career, I thought chemotherapy was the only option. I wanted to know what else scientists were developing to treat cancer. It's important to me because it's my way of making a difference.

Q How did you become interested in science?

A I was always interested in science at a young age, I actually thought I was going to be a doctor. There's actually a picture of me in nursery with a stethoscope on! My aunty is a doctor and seeing her made me think that it was possible. But I didn't get into medicine and ended up studying a biomed course. I quickly fell in love with the process of scientific research, and later drug development. Before then, I hadn't even realised being a scientist was an option.



Q How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A It makes me feel optimistic for the next generation of Black female scientists. I think people often underestimate the importance of representation, but when you see someone who looks like you in a space where you didn't think you could belong, it makes you feel like you can do it too.

Pamela Banana Sweeny, PhD earned her degree in Chemistry from the University of Warwick and currently works at Hyaltech Ltd., a biomedical company near Edinburgh, UK.

Q What is your scientific area of focus and why is it important to you?

A I am particularly passionate about drug discovery, especially in the pursuit of novel treatments for incurable diseases and conditions that present significant challenges, such as cancer. My previous experience includes antimicrobial research, driven by the growing need for new therapeutic options. Drug discovery captivates me because it holds the potential to transform lives and offer hope in the face of serious illnesses.



Q How did you become interested in science?

A From a young age, I was captivated by biology, chemistry, and mathematics. I realized early on that my career path would lead me into the world of science. I find the subject both intriguing and challenging, but what fascinates me even more is its remarkable ability to transform lives. Science addresses numerous challenges and offers solutions to a wide array of problems including the medical, technology, food and energy industries.

Q How does it feel to be featured in the Portraits of Black Female Scientists project?

A I feel truly honored and privileged to be featured in Portraits of Black Female Scientists. It's essential for Black scientists to be represented, recognized, and acknowledged for their significant contributions to the field of science. We need to advocate for greater visibility not only during Black History Month but throughout the entire year.



Tricia McCarter, CDMP, PCM

Tricia McCarter, CDMP, PCM, is ASPET's Marketing and Communications Manager and the Managing Editor of *The Pharmacologist*. She has more than five years of communications and marketing experience within the non-profit industry. She holds a master's degree in journalism and a double certification as a Certified Digital Marketing Professional through the Digital Marketing Institute and a Professional Certified Marketer in Digital Marketing through the American Marketing Association.



Lynne Harris, MA, APR

ASPET thanks Lynne Harris, MA, APR, for her contributions to this article and for working with Laura Eghobamien to make this possible.



The 2025 Canadian Society of Pharmacology and Therapeutics (CSPT) Annual Meeting will be in Vancouver from June 2–5, 2025.

This year's theme is "From the Sea to the Sky: Unlocking the Mysteries of Drug Action."

Come join us in Vancouver for stunning ocean and mountain views, vibrant dining, and waterfall walks—a perfect blend of science and scenery! Registrants are invited to attend Dinner at the Peak at the Summit of Grouse Mountain. [Tickets are available](#) for this event that will take place on June 3, 2025.

A limited number of [trainee travel awards](#) are available to CSPT/ASPET members who are presenting their work at the CSPT Annual Meeting.

[Register](#)

[View the Program](#)

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Become an ASPET *Washington Fellow*!

The Washington Fellows Program is one of ASPET's many avenues engaging in science policy advocacy.

If you are a graduate student, postdoc, or researcher no more than four years past the completion of your postdoctoral training and are interested in science policy, this is for you! No prior policy experience is required.

Applications open May 1, 2025.

[Learn more](#)

A stylized graphic of a city skyline in shades of purple and white, positioned behind the main title text.

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