Department of Biomedical Sciences welcomes, Dr. Magdia De Jesus

Dr. Magdia De Jesus received her M.S and Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 2009 under the mentorship of Dr. Arturo Casadevall. Subsequently, she served in two postdoctoral appointments with the Wadsworth Center, New York State Department of Health – first as an Emerging Infectious Disease Fellow under the sponsorship of the Center for Disease Control with Dr. Kimberlee Musser (2009-11), and second as a Postdoctoral Fellow under the sponsorship of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Life Sciences Research Foundation with Dr. Nicholas J. Mantis (2011-14). She joined the School of Public Health at the State University of New York at Albany this September as an assistant professor of biomedical sciences. Dr. De Jesus has co-authored more than twenty peer reviewed scientific papers and several book chapters and web based publications. Her most recent research seeks to understand how pathogens and vaccine delivery vehicles cross the intestinal epithelium and initiate dendritic cells situated just below the epithelium of mouse Peyer’s patches. Her work has important implications in the areas of mucosal vaccines, colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and intestinal tolerance. Dr. De Jesus is currently the president of the American Society for Microbiology Eastern New York Branch, she is the pioneer of the first national recognized postdoctoral chapter by the American Society for Microbiology and she serves on numerous committees including the steering committee for the Research Experience for Undergraduates summer internship (REU). Dr. De Jesus was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Harlem, New York City. She credits her interest and success in a scientific academic career to a “pipeline” of mentors throughout her educational journey.

Student Profile: Dr. Sumayya Alchalabi

Everyone at this institute has experienced hardships in their path to furthering their education, but we have endured and conquered our obstacles. Sumayya Alchalabi is no different, despite the dire situation she faced. Here is her story.

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www.albany.edu/sph/bms
Virginia Chu Selected for Boren Awards Fellowship

Virginia Chu is a third year student in Dr. Jan Conn’s lab with a dissertation research focus involving the investigation of *Anopheles darlingi* population genetics, and life history traits in response to temperature from collection locations throughout Brazil. She will be collecting female mosquitoes from 3 different latitudes across Brazil, rearing their offspring at 3 different temperatures, and conducting population genomics on the collected females. Dr. Conn has had a long collaboration with Dr. Maria Anice Sallum at the University of São Paulo, where Virginia will be conducting this work. Virginia spent time assisting Bill Lainhart with his field research in Peru and felt that learning the language of the country in which you are conducting research is extremely important and fulfilling. After some investigation, she found the Boren Awards for International Study. This group, which is supervised by the National Security Education program, provides fellowships and scholarships to graduate and undergraduate students to help them acquire language skills in languages of national security interest. The ultimate goal of this group is to increase the number of educated individuals with foreign language skills in the U.S., across all disciplines. As a requirement of becoming a Boren fellow, recipients must work in a government agency for at least 1 year after graduation. Virginia applied for the fellowship with the support of Dr. Conn, and requested funding for language study (both domestically and internationally) in Portuguese, to assist her research in Brazil. Excitingly for her and the BMS program, Virginia was selected for the fellowship, and is only one of the few Boren Fellows who has a focus in the natural sciences. This fellowship has provided funding for the “Introductory Portuguese” class at UAlbany, in which she is currently enrolled, and for future language study in São Paulo, Brazil, beginning in spring 2016. Virginia stated “Receiving this fellowship has afforded me great opportunities to enhance my research experience, while providing me language training for my future career.” Congratulations Virginia Chu.

Dr. Randall Morse receives National Science Foundation Grant

This grant which runs from August 1, 2015 until July 31, 2018 is specifically for Dr. Morse’s research on “Recruitment and Dynamics of the Mediator Complex.” Mediator is linked to public health concerns and is thus a worthy research topic for a grant. For instance, mutations in Mediator proteins have been connected with some types of cancer and with several genetic diseases, and so understanding the mechanisms by which it functions is important from a public health standpoint. The natural significance of Mediator is in eukaryotic transcription, it is a protein complex that is important in gene regulation, as it acts as a bridge between the molecules that indicate whether a gene should be turned on or off and the protein machinery that transcribes that gene into messenger RNA. The funded work will investigate mechanisms by which Mediator is recruited to the genes that it controls, and the dynamics of its association with different types of gene targets.
Student Profile : Sumayya Al-chalabi

Sumayya Al-chalabi is a first year masters student in BMS. Her story is one of perseverance and determination. She graduated from the College of Medicine, University of Mosul in Iraq in 2007 and worked as a resident doctor in different hospitals in Mosul City. During her residency she was forced to move northern Iraq because of the bad situation in Mosul city; the city that would later be taken by ISIS. She grew up in Mosul city in a large family of seven siblings, four brothers and three sisters. Her father was an ENT surgeon who also graduated from the same college. He was well known in her city and treated many patients for free. Sumayya learned a lot from her father. He encouraged her to study medicine and he was so happy when she started her medical study. Unfortunately, in April 2007 he was killed by terrorists before her graduation. He was among the many doctors and professors that were killed as they refused to cooperate with the terrorists either by working for them or making regular payments. Two months after that, Sumayya graduated and moved to Northern Iraq with her husband and son where her husband started working with International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC). During her time there, she couldn't find a job because of her nationality; therefore, she decided to work in Mosul city which is one hour away, and kept going back and forth between the two cities. She started her residency in Mosul hospitals in 2009. Her program required two years of rotation in different clinical departments before specializing. At the end of her rotation, her father-in-law, who was a general surgeon, and the head of Medico-Legal Institute in Mosul was killed by terrorist in 2011. Sumayya and her family decided to leave Mosul forever. Sooner or later her family would face the same fate. They settled outside of Mosul where she gave birth to her third child, who they named after her father in law, Sameer. In June 2014 her mother and siblings would move to Northern Iraq when Mosul city was taken over by ISIS, later they would confiscate her family home in Mosul with all their belongings, and beautiful memories. Most of her family left Mosul and some of them went to Turkey and other neighboring countries. Sumayya was the most fortunate to have come to the US, which she considers her new and safe home. She is planning to explore this beautiful and vibrant country (she has already visited Mount Rushmore in SD and Yellow Stone National Park in WY with her family).

In 2012, given her high medical college scores, she was granted a scholarship from the Higher Committee for Education Development in Iraq (HCED) to pursue a master in BMS. This was a great opportunity for her since her interests are in Molecular Genetics and there are no advanced laboratories in Iraq. School of Public Health at SUNY Albany in an American University event. She talked to him about her interest in studying Biomedical Sciences in the United States. A few months later she received an email indicating the BMS department provided a conditional acceptance. When she arrived in Albany, Dr. Arash helped her and her family to settle down. She is so grateful to the Office of the International Students and to IELP staff who coached her during the first year of her studies and facilitated her transition to the masters program. She is also very grateful to the Biomedical Sciences Department for being supportive and positive. After that long journey, she is now fully engaged in the masters program, and doing her lab rotation at the Cancer Research Center with Dr. Douglas Conklin. She feels very fortunate to have faculty and staff providing her with guidance, support and encouragement to achieve her father’s dream.
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Sumayya is interested in Breast Cancer research, as breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, and one of the leading causes of death in both Iraq and the US. In order to be able to overcome the disease, it is very important that scientists and physicians understand the underlying molecular defects that contribute to the development of the disease and how they correlate to the pathological features. She has a strong conviction that the world is on the verge of discovering a definite cure to cancer. She believes the time is now for the tremendous body of intensive researchers to culminate their research. She would like to contribute to this goal, and her dream is to see a world in which a pill (or procedure) can cure cancer, and people will look to the cancer with no fear, as they look now to any bacterial infection that was once a major killer.

In addition to being a researcher/scientist, her long term objective is to be a university lecturer, and enjoy sharing her knowledge and listening to other people’s perspectives. She believes that discussion and exchange of ideas is the best way to push knowledge forward.

### Upcoming Events and Important Dates

**Research Seminars:**

Annually all 3rd year students are required to present their research to members of BMS, including students and faculty. This year there will be seven presentations on the following dates:

**Thursday, November 19th at 2 pm**  
Virginia Chu and Kara Levinson

**Thursday, January 21st at 2 pm**  
Chris Sevinsky, Chistina Herrera, Roxie Girardin, and Danielle Kelley

**Thursday, February 25th at 2 pm**  
Lis Knoll, Patrick Murphy, and Christina Allen

**Thursday, March 24th at 2 pm**  
Sameera Nallanthignal, Janmeet Saina, Alicia Salinero, and Jason Wong

**Thursday, April 28th at 2 pm**  
Sara Beaudin, Richard Johnson, Sridevi Raganathan, and Lauren Rose-Boehnlein

All presentations will be in the CMS building 5th floor conference room. Attendance is required for all students, so come support your classmates!!
BMS welcomes 2015 class

The program is pleased to announce that the incoming class of 2015, consisting of fourteen students of all backgrounds, has begun their academic journey.

Fall 2015 Incoming Class

Steven Davis, PhD

Ladan Moheimanian, PhD

Amanda Poon, PhD

Angie Richards, PhD

James Swift, PhD

Sumayya Al-chalabi, MS

Shufeng Sun, PhD

Kamran Zamani, MPH

Jordan Wartts, MPH

Ololade Thomas, MPH

James Long, MPH

Melissa Francois, MPH

Casey Warszycki, PhD

Ryan McDowell, PhD
Ryan McDowell, PhD
Ladan Moheimanian, PhD
Amanda Poon, PhD
Angie Richards, PhD
James Swift, PhD
Shufeng Sun, PhD
Melissa Francois, MPH
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