



DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACOLOGY AND TOXICOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE GRAD-PHARMER'S ALMANAC

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Welcome

If you've missed previous publications of the *Grad-Pharmer's Almanac*, you may access archived copies on our department website: www.pharmtox.utoronto.ca/programs/grad/almanac.htm

HONORABLE MENTION - PHARMACOLOGY AT UofT

The annual National Taiwan University (NTU) rankings were released on October 9 and were highlighted in the UofT Bulletin. These rankings are based on indicators representing three different criteria of scientific performance: research productivity, research impact and research excellence. The good news for us is that there is a metric reflecting scientific performance in the area of pharmacology & toxicology. Our rank is #2 in the world in this category.

See: <http://nturanking.lis.ntu.edu.tw/DataPage/TOP300.aspx?query=PharmacoTox&y=2014>

David Riddick

FACULTY/STUDENT/STAFF EVENTS

How many pharmacology students does it take to hammer a nail? About 9 actually... On Saturday October 25th, the PGSA participated in a Habitat for Humanity build and raised over \$1000 to support home building for families in need across Toronto. Fuelled by power tools and pizza, our team spent the day building closet frames for several houses in the townhouse complex being built at Lawrence Avenue and Brimley Road. Many of our build leaders were past recipients of Habitat houses and it was wonderful to represent the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology as we built these new houses with them. The weather was beautiful and it was a great day all around.

Thanks to Dr. Riddick and all of our student participants for their efforts, as well as many others in our department for their generous donations.

Graham Mazereeuw
2014 PGSA Executive

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IMPORTANT DATES IN DECEMBER/JANUARY:

- December 1:** CIHR/NSERC CGS-M ResearchNet portal closes to applicants.
- December 1:** John Charles Polanyi Prize applications due at SGS.
- December 1:** Autism Scholar Award applications due at SGS.
- December 1:** Ontario Women's Health Scholars Award applications due in PCL Graduate Office.
- December 3:** Doctoral Completion Award applications due in PCL Graduate Office.
- December 5:** CIHR/NSERC CGS-M printed applications due in PCL Graduate Office.
- December 5:** Adel S. Sedra Distinguished Graduate Award applications due at SGS.
- December 9:** Last day to purchase tickets for Annual Christmas Buffet Lunch.
- December 16:** Annual Christmas Buffet Lunch at the Faculty Club.
- December 22 - January 2:** University closed for Christmas holidays.

Best
wishes for
the
Season.



NOT SO FAMOUS LAST WORDS:

Not counting the Year-End Edition, this will be the last Grad-Pharmer's Almanac publication that I will edit. Over the past 10 years, we have published articles about many people, but this time, as co-editor, I get to write about me!



When I entered the secretarial field in Guyana, South America, the Wang Computer was just one-year old (I think it's now in the Smithsonian) and Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister of Canada.

How did I get from there to here? Other than my family members, most people do not know my journey; but my experiences are likely quite similar to that of many immigrants. My family subscribed to National Geographic magazines, so travel made it on to my "TO DO" list while I was quite young. As a teenager, I dreamed of being a flight attendant and travelling all over the world. However, my father insisted that I needed a more stable career. He suggested secretarial school - then I became fascinated with operating one of those nifty telephone switchboards (all those lovely cords - high technology)! So, in 1972, armed with 120 wpm Pitman's Shorthand and a brand new secretarial certificate, I was hired as a junior stenographer in a small trading company. Two years later, a friend mentioned that the Zambian Government was hiring secretaries. On a whim I applied - and was surprised when I was hired. I was ready to quit my job and go halfway across the world to Africa - to the total shock of my poor parents. There were 5 secretaries in my group, and we were all seconded to the Ministry of Health in various parts of the country. I had a blast for 3 years on the Zambian Copperbelt - meeting new people, learning new skills; and becoming immersed in a foreign culture and work environment. Fortunately for me,

much of the population spoke English. I was surprised to find a large number of expats from various parts of Africa, and places like the UK, Germany and South America. We were young and far away from home, so we formed a small community, and many of us still keep in touch.

Three years later, my contract was up and I was missing my family, so back to Guyana I went - the long way round via East Africa, Europe and Toronto. With my now international experience, I was hired by the UNDP. That was my second time encountering Canadians (although this time they spoke French). I had a prestigious job that paid well - but now Guyana seemed small and far away from the rest of the world. I was soon thinking of moving on, but this time the choice was between New York (maybe I could find a job at UN Headquarters) or Toronto. I liked Toronto (my visit had been in the spring, so no snow!) and I had an aunt here. So, 1-1/2 years later, I emigrated to Canada. As a new immigrant, I worked in insurance, and then at Sick Kids Hospital until 1984 when (again on information provided by a friend) I met some recruiters from Bermuda, and was offered a one-year administrative contract there. Again, I quit my job, put my belongings into storage, and was off. Bermuda was a dream come true, but strict immigration laws meant I had to return to snowy Canada. After a 3-year stint at the Family Court Clinic, I was back to "temping" at Sick Kids, when I met Dr. Allan Okey (then PCL Chair). He suggested I check out the Pharmacology Department at UofT. I thought the university could be a good place to work while I figured out my next move. That was over 25 years ago. Considering my itchy feet, I have often wondered if there is something in the water here.....

I have been extremely blessed over the years with employment opportunities. I did not become a flight attendant, but as a secretary I have had the chance to travel and to work in various parts of the world - so my dream has (and continues to) come true. Thanks Dad! I have never regretted remaining at UofT. It has been a pleasure and honor to work in the Pharmacology & Toxicology Department. I will particularly miss the camaraderie among the staff, faculty and students. I have met some remarkable people, made great friends; and can testify that this is an excellent place to work and grow. But it's time to pass the torch. Some of you know that I love going on mission trips; travelling and volunteering at my church. My bucket list is much shorter, but there are still things left for me to do: new skills to learn; places to discover; people to see.....

I can wish only good things for the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology. Hopefully I can keep in touch so that I can hear about all the amazing things that I know will be accomplished here. Thanks for the memories everyone. Wishing you all the very very best,