

Research Awards Given

● The Satu M. Somani Memorial Award was presented to **Dr. Jenneé A. Rommel**, a 2008 graduate from Quincy. The award is presented to a senior medical student for outstanding performance in pharmacology and therapeutics. Rommel is the daughter of Pamela Rommel of Quincy. She earned her bachelor's degree at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (2004).

The Somani award was established in memory of **Satu M. Somani, Ph.D.**, who was an SIU professor of pharmacology and toxicology from 1974 until his death in 2002.

● The **Barbara L. Armour** Memorial Award was presented to **Christine A. Bosgraaf**, a certified veterinary technician in SIU's pharmacology department, who has been on the staff since 1993. The award is presented to recognize excellence, dedication and contributions to science research. She is the daughter of Roy and Anna Bosgraaf of Clermont, Fla. Bosgraaf is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Springfield (2006) and Parkland Community College (1987). The Armour award was established to commemorate Barbara Lawhorn Armour, a pharmacology researcher, who died in 1995.

● The **Hemal Vakharia** Memorial Award was presented to **Angela Qian**, a junior at Glenwood High School in Chatham, for her summer work in the laboratory of **Louis Premkumar, Ph.D.**, associate professor of pharmacology. Qian is the daughter of Lynne Ling and Hong Qian of Chatham. The award is presented to a high school or college student who has provided significant assistance to faculty research. It was established in memory of Hemal Vakharia, a summer-help student who died in an automobile accident in 1992.

Grants given for HIV, STD studies

The Illinois Department of Public Health awarded both an SIU physician and a School of Medicine research scientist each a one-year grant.

Dr. Janak Koirala, associate professor of medicine, received a second year of funding to improve HIV/AIDS education and prevention in central Illinois. The project is developing culturally specific and developmentally appropriate HIV/AIDS educational interventions for high school students in central and metro east areas of Illinois. The total budget for this year is \$25,000.

Wiley Jenkins, Ph.D., assistant professor of family and community medicine and medical microbiology, immunology and cell biology, received a grant to study Internet-based sexual transmitted disease (STD) interventions in rural Illinois. The study will examine the availability of Internet-based service for STD information and evaluate its effectiveness as a complement to traditional screening interventions for rural communities. The total budget for the grant is \$60,000.

National grants to support pediatric OMS studies

Dr. Michael R. Pranzatelli, professor of neurology and pediatrics and chief of child neurology, received four national grants totaling \$578,362 for his projects involving pediatric opsoclonus-myoclonus syndrome (OMS).

OMS causes a sudden inability in a child's capacity to talk, sit or walk. The disease is triggered by a childhood brain tumor called neuroblastoma. The SIU studies may develop new therapies for OMS in children.

A three-year grant has been awarded by the Thrasher Research Fund to study cytokines as biomarkers and therapeutic targets in paraneoplastic OMS. The total budget of the grant is \$279,836.

A one-year grant has been awarded by Questcor Pharmaceuticals, Inc. to analyze the immunological response to adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), a drug used in treating OMS. The total budget for the grant is \$144,386.

Another one-year grant has been awarded by Genentech/Biogen IDEC to study how the drug, rituximab, alters inflammation in pediatric OMS. The total budget for the grant is \$99,740.

A fourth grant has been awarded by the Chicago Institute of Neurosurgery and Neuroresearch Foundation to study lymphocyte cytokine receptors in OMS. The total budget of the grant is \$54,400.

Pranzatelli's research on pediatric myoclonus has received national funding for more than 20 years and now totals more than \$3.7 million.

Pranzatelli joined the SIU faculty in 1999. He is director of the National Pediatric Myoclonus Center based at SIU and a member of the medical team at St. John's Children's Hospital. He was a research fellow in neuropharmacology at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles at the University of Southern California (1982-85) and NIH postdoctoral trainee at the Pediatric Stolinsky Laboratory (1981-82). Pranzatelli completed his residency in pediatric neurology at the University of Colorado (1982) and a residency in pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University (1979). He earned his medical degree from Pennsylvania State University (1976) and his bachelor's degree at Duquesne University (1968).