



Spring 2026

Issue No. 56  
Sam VanEtten, PhD, Editor

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## **CHAPTER MISSION STATEMENT**

The National Capital Area Chapter of the Society of Toxicology (NCAC-SOT) was established to provide a regional focus for scientists of all disciplines interested in toxicology. The Chapter acts to:

- Sponsor and co-sponsor symposia on current issues in toxicology.
- Provide an annual award to an outstanding student in toxicology to assist in attending the Annual Meeting of the SOT.
- Maintain communication with SOT regarding current toxicology and regulatory concerns.
- Sponsor Regional Chapter events at the SOT Annual Meetings.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE NCAC-SOT PRESIDENT:**

Dear Fellow NCAC-SOT Members,

As I wrap up my tenure as the 2025-2026 NCAC President, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to NCAC's Executive Committee, NCAC members, SOT, and many others for their support in making this another great year for our regional chapter. I am especially grateful for all the efforts of the Executive Committee in planning and executing NCAC activities throughout the year. One of our past events was the NCAC fall virtual meeting that was held on November 6, 2025, which featured presentations on emerging environmental exposures of concern and regulatory testing using new approach methodologies. This event also featured a lively round of trainee speed talks, followed by awards and recognitions, and finally a career panel discussion.



With the SOT Annual Meeting in San Diego coming up in March, NCAC would like to invite members and interested members to join us on Monday, March 23, 2026, from 12:15-1:15 PM (PT) at the Marriott Marquis, Balboa Room for the NCAC-SOT luncheon. This free event will include a boxed lunch, award announcements, introductions of the 2026-27 officers, and networking opportunities to connect with colleagues. The event is open to all in-person Annual Meeting attendees interested in joining the chapter regardless of current membership status. Please register for the luncheon [here](#).

Lastly, being a part of NCAC provides opportunities for members to expand their network and learn about how toxicology is applied and practiced across various professions and disciplines. In addition to the professional development advantages of being a member of NCAC, there are also engagement opportunities for students and trainees. As part of our goal to raise awareness about NCAC and increase our student membership, our regional chapter reached out to universities both within and surrounding the DC-VA-MD region. We look forward to continuing these outreach efforts while providing ways for students and trainees to get involved in NCAC events and activities.

We appreciate your continued support and please be on the lookout throughout the year for upcoming NCAC events!

Sincerely,

*Frances Belmonte, PhD, DABT, NCAC-SOT President, 2025-2026*

## **THE VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

I am honored to currently serve as your Vice President and am looking forward to transitioning into the role of President beginning in May. It is a privilege to support such a strong and engaged community of toxicology professionals across our region.

As we begin planning for our 2026 Fall Symposium, the Executive Committee is considering hosting an in-person meeting this year. We recognize that in-person events offer valuable opportunities for fostering scientific dialogue, cross-sector collaboration, mentorship, and meaningful professional connections that are central to our mission as toxicologists. At the same time, we want to ensure that any format we choose reflects the interests and availability of our membership. In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to gather your input regarding your interest in attending an in-person Fall Symposium. Your feedback will be essential in guiding our planning efforts. We encourage you to share your thoughts and help us shape a program that best serves our community.

I am also hoping to see many of you at the upcoming Society of Toxicology Annual Meeting. If you are attending, please be sure to join us for our regional chapter luncheon on Monday, March 23, from 12:15 to 1:15 PM at the Balboa Room, Marriott Marquis Marina.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the NCAC and the field of toxicology.

Warm regards,

*Mariana Farcas, PhD, DABT, NCAC-SOT Vice President*

## **THE PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

As my Presidential Chain term comes to an end this coming May, I have been reflecting on the accomplishments made over the past few years in our Regional Chapter. Our region is uniquely impacted and influenced by the federal government, which has in the last 1+ year caused a lot of uncertainties with regards to our members and Officers' ability to travel and participate in NCAC and SOT events, has resulted in staffing instability at local federal agencies, has introduced rapid shifts in regulatory processes, and has decimated public health/biomedical research funding. This turmoil can be felt across the greater Society of Toxicology, but we in the National Capital region are particularly sensitive and impacted by these changes.

All that being said, I am very proud of the NCAC for pushing forward to continue with providing high quality educational content through our yearly webinars and virtual symposia meetings, hosting in-person SOT Annual Meeting luncheons, and providing travel and presentation awards to trainee members over the last 3 years. I want to thank the NCAC-SOT for the opportunity to serve in the presidential chain, and in particular, for the NCAC Officers for their collaboration, ideas, and dedication to the Regional Chapter. I wish all the best to the NCAC Executive Committee Officers as they continue to serve students and toxicology professionals within the Chapter. I will remain an active member of NCAC-SOT, and I hope that our membership will continue to do as well. Again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve, and I hope to see you at future NCAC events.

Best wishes,

*Melissa Badding, PhD, DABT, NCAC-SOT Past President*

## **THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S MESSAGE:**

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of our NCAC Newsletter! As my second year of being the NCAC-SOT Newsletter Editor comes to a close, I want to thank all of the NCAC members who shared their accomplishments and to the NCAC Executive Board for their contributions to the newsletter. I look forward to future issues of our NCAC Newsletter and continuing to celebrate the work of our chapter and all of the amazing members! Remember that you can find past issues of the [NCAC Newsletter](#) on the NCAC Website.

Please continue to share your accomplishments and events with us for inclusion in future newsletters!

Best,

*Sam VanEtten, PhD, NCAC-SOT Newsletter Editor*

### **THE STUDENT LIASION'S MESSAGE:**

It is a great privilege to serve as your Student Liaison over this past year. We had a wonderful Fall Symposium in November that included a Career Panel of toxicologists in a wide range of fields from academia to consulting to legal regulation. While this was open to all members, I hope that our student members specifically found this to be an informative event with an opportunity to interact with toxicologists in several different fields and provided insight as they navigate the decision process of making the next steps in their careers. I would also like take this opportunity to challenge our membership to submit ideas for activities that NCAC may assist with to promote student and early-career scientist success. Please send your ideas to [leah.j.schneider.civ@health.mil](mailto:leah.j.schneider.civ@health.mil).

Lastly, it is with great enthusiasm that we announce our Travel Award winners for this year. Our postdoctoral winner is Dr. Xing Chen and our graduate student winner is Morgan Steiner. Awards will be presented at the NCAC Luncheon. Please be sure to stop by their posters and congratulate our winners!

Warm regards,

*Leah Schneider, PhD, NCAC-SOT Councilor-Student Liaison*

### **THE TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Greetings NCAC members. According to the 2025 bank statements and general ledger, NCAC began the year with a balance of \$25,548.27 and ended the year with net assets of \$22,666.31. As of November 30, 2025, NCAC received \$600.00 in donations, \$1,690.00 in chapter dues, and \$2,000 from SOT. In 2025, NCAC expended a total of \$5,936.96.

Sincerely,

*Jorge G. Muñiz Ortiz, PhD, DABT, NCAC-SOT Treasurer*

### **NCAC-SOT MEMBERSHIP**

Did you remember to renew both your SOT and NCAC memberships this year? Annual membership fees for NCAC-SOT are \$30 for regular memberships, \$5 for postdoctoral members, and \$0 for full-time students. These fees are used to fund our annual meeting reception, our annual fall symposium, and student awards.

**Non-SOT members** who are interested in joining NCAC-SOT should complete a [membership application](#). **Current SOT members** can instantly join NCAC-SOT by logging into their SOT account and paying the NCAC-SOT [membership dues](#).

## NCAC-SOT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS (2025-2026)



### **President**

Frances Belmonte, PhD, DABT  
King & Spalding

### **Vice President**

Mariana Farcas, PhD, DABT  
Altria Client Services, LLC

### **Secretary**

Leslie Patton, PhD, DABT  
ChemReg Compliance Solutions LLC

### **Treasurer**

Jorge Muñoz Ortiz, PhD, DABT

### **Past President**

Melissa Badding, PhD, DABT  
Biologics Consulting Group

### **Councilor–Newsletter Editor**

Sam VanEtten, PhD

### **Councilor–Student Liaison**

Leah Schneider, PhD  
Defense Centers for Public Health, Aberdeen

### **Councilor–Website Coordinator**

Jessica Camacho, PhD

### **Postdoctoral Representative**

Mohammad Siddiqi, PhD  
Virginia Commonwealth University

### **Graduate Student Representative**

José Francisco Delgado, PhD  
University of Maryland, College Park

### **Graduate Student Vice Representative**

Diana P. Garnica Acevedo, MS  
The George Washington University

## **NCAC-SOT ACTIVITIES RECAP**

### ***NCAC-SOT Virtual Fall 2025 Symposium***

On Thursday, November 6, 2025, the NCAC-SOT held their virtual fall symposium in which several NCAC members and non-members presented on toxicology themed topics among a diverse audience. The symposium included two seminar-style sessions with speakers, a trainee and early career scientist speed talk session, honorarium announcements, and a career panel discussion. This event was open to all regardless of current NCAC membership status. The program materials can be found on the NCAC website under past [events](#).

## **UPCOMING NCAC-SOT ACTIVITIES**

### ***NCAC-SOT Annual Meeting Reception***

Monday, March 23, 2026 from 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM (PDT)

Marriott Marquis, Balboa Room, 333 W Harbor Dr., San Diego, CA

This free event will include a boxed lunch, award announcements, introductions of the 2026-27 officers, and networking opportunities to connect with colleagues. The event is open to all in-person Annual Meeting attendees interested in joining the chapter regardless of current membership status. During registration, please indicate any food allergies that you would like us to know about.

Please [register](#) by March 9, 2025 to reserve a lunch.

## **NCAC AWARDS**



### **2026 Bern Schwetz Merit Award Winners:**

**Xing Chen, PhD:** Postdoctoral Fellow in Systems Toxicology at the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), National Institutes of Health (NIH)

**Abstract:** Quantitative High-Throughput Screening Identifies Small-Molecule Inhibitors of Wnt/ $\beta$ -catenin Signaling

**Morgan Steiner:** PhD student at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Abstract:** Leveraging a human induced pluripotent stem cell-derived cardiomyocyte system to study the effects of inorganic arsenic exposure during cardiac development

### **National Capital Area Chapter Bern Schwetz Merit Award**

Dr. Bern Schwetz was a nationally recognized expert in reproductive and developmental toxicology. Dr. Schwetz served as President of the NCAC of the SOT from 2000-2001. Since 2003, in Dr. Schwetz's honor, the NCAC-SOT provides awards to help promising early career research scientists attend the SOT annual meeting.



Eligible applicants must be:

- ★ Enrolled full-time in a graduate or post-graduate program within the NCAC-SOT region (MD, VA, DC);
- ★ Presenting research at the upcoming SOT Annual Meeting;
- ★ A student or postdoctoral member of NCAC-SOT. See **Note** below.

Complete applications must include:

- ★ A copy of the abstract submitted for the SOT Annual Meeting.
- ★ A confirmation that the abstract was accepted (such as a copy of an email).
- ★ Verification that the applicant is a full-time student or full-time postdoctoral research associate (e.g., a letter (or 2 letters) that bear(s) the signature of the student and the signature of their mentor).

Winner receives: a cash award to support travel to attend the SOT Annual Meeting.

**NOTE:** Students are eligible if they apply for membership in conjunction with registration for the SOT meeting. NCAC-SOT membership is available to individuals that have a professional interest in toxicology.

See the full details and application deadline for this and other NCAC-SOT awards on our website [here](#).

## NCAC SPONSORSHIP

**NCAC-SOT would like to thank our generous sponsors!**



### Gold (\$600 or more)

ToxServices, LLC  
Society of Toxicology



Sponsorship offers an excellent opportunity to increase the visibility of your organization as a champion of advancing the science of toxicology. Sponsorship tiers are listed above. Donations are now being accepted [online](#).

## MEMBERS ACCOMPLISHMENTS CORNER

The NCAC-SOT likes to acknowledge the accomplishments of its members and celebrate their successes. The NCAC board sends an email twice a year to the members asking to share publications, presentations and other accomplishments from the last issue of the newsletter to date. Please take advantage of this opportunity to share your accomplishments with your colleagues in our Newsletter.

Please send accomplishments to Sam VanEtten (NCAC Newsletter Editor) at [svanetten21@gmail.com](mailto:svanetten21@gmail.com). Accomplishments will be incorporated into the next issue of the newsletter.

*Presented in alphabetical order of first author with NCAC-SOT members in bold.*

### Publications

**Badding Melissa**, Aly N, Sondenheimer K. Determining a NOAEL for the consortium linking academic and regulatory insights on BPA toxicity (CLARITY-BPA) core study. *Front Toxicol.* 2025 Aug 21;7:1639737. doi: 10.3389/ftox.2025.1639737. PMID: 40918937; PMCID: PMC12408520.

Cao X, **Farcas Mariana T**, Prepelitskaya YV, Ritzenthaler A, Mollignano J, Oldach J, Gutierrez MM. Comparative evaluation of artificial saliva and complete artificial saliva as solvent vehicles for *in vitro* toxicity testing of oral tobacco products. *Front Toxicol.* 2025 Dec 8;7:1657073. doi: 10.3389/ftox.2025.1657073. PMID: 41438570; PMCID: PMC12719288.

Hilberer A, Hoffman L, Madrid M, Labib R, **Costin G-Emilia**. Assessment of phototoxicity potential of botanicals as cosmetic ingredients using the *in vitro* 3T3 neutral red uptake phototoxicity test. *Regul Toxicol Pharmacol.* 2025 Dec;163:105940. doi: 10.1016/j.yrtph.2025.105940. Epub 2025 Sep 9. PMID: 40935006.

Huang H, Sanders JN, Warren GL, Patron A, Ninobla A, Inoue K, Valk H, Sadler M, Amorelli B, Hanson M, Acquaviva E, Lear E, Creelman M, Nabua C, Pilat E, Latifzadeh D, Price G, Raabe H, **Costin G-Emilia**. The impossible made possible through the use of New Approach Methodologies: Dermal safety assessment of potential insect repellent or insecticidal active ingredients using a high-throughput approach to the *in vitro* Skin Irritation Test (OECD TG 439). *Altern Lab Anim.* 2026 Jan;54(1):28-34. doi: 10.1177/02611929251408412. Epub 2025 Dec 23. PMID: 41432012.

Islas-Robles A, Ramani M, Phillips J, **Costin G-Emilia**. New Horizons in Skin Sensitization Assessment of

Complex Mixtures: The Use of New Approach Methodologies Beyond Regulatory Approaches. *Toxics*. 2025 Aug 20;13(8):693. doi: 10.3390/toxics13080693. PMID: 40863969; PMCID: PMC12390330.

Li Q, Sowers A, Zhang L, **Stueckle Todd A**, Qian Y, Morsi BI, Wafle TK, Rosinski R, Shi F, Li B. Conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> from power plant into CaCO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles. *J Environ Chem Eng*. 2026;14(1):120601. doi: 10.1016/j.jece.2025.120601.

Perrin J, **Costin G-Emilia**, Ayehunie S, Kandárová H, Landry T, Brown J, Clippinger AJ. Using a reconstructed human vaginal epithelium model to assess irritation: A proof-of-concept study supporting regulatory qualification of the method for use with personal lubricants. *Toxicol In Vitro*. 2026 Apr;112:106198. doi: 10.1016/j.tiv.2026.106198. Epub 2026 Jan 16. PMID: 41548851.

**Stueckle Todd A**, Jensen J, Coyle JP, Wagner A, Derk R, Kornberg TG, Friend SA, Schreiner M, Ufelle AC, Agarwal S, Gupta RK, Dinu CZ, Rojanasakul LW. In Vitro Toxicity Assessment of Pre- and Post-incinerated Organomodified Nanoclays on Airway Epithelial and Lung Fibroblast Cells. *Chem Res Toxicol*. 2025 Oct 20;38(10):1708-1728. doi: 10.1021/acs.chemrestox.5c00206. Epub 2025 Sep 19. PMID: 40970902.

## **Presentations**

Clippinger A, van der Zalm AJ, Raabe HA, **Costin G-Emilia**. Establishing scientific confidence in test methods: shipping studies to aid in the transferability of methods using cell- and tissue-based test systems and reagents. Poster presented at EUROTOX 2025, Athens, Greece, 14th-17th September.

Dailey K, Ramani M, **Costin G-Emilia**. EpiSensa Technology Transfer: Navigating the Winding Roads to Destination Through Effective Optimization and Troubleshooting. Postert presented at the ASCCT 2025 Meeting, Gaithersburg, MD, USA, 21st-23rd October.

Nabua C, Acquaviva E, Lear E, Creelman M, Swade J, Schnittger C, Wilt N, **Costin G-Emilia**, Huang H. Modified Screening Methodology Evaluating the Ocular Irritation Potential Using Human Corneal Epithelium Model EpiOcular™ for Cosmetic and Personal-Care Products. Postert presented at the ASCCT 2025 Meeting, Gaithersburg, MD, USA, 21st-23rd October.

## **Other**

**G-Emilia Costin** was a co-chair at the ASCCT 2025 Meeting in Gaithersburg, MD for the oral session “Leaf it to the NAMs: Untangling the Safety of Botanicals”.

**G-Emilia Costin** is a guest editor for the *Toxics Journal*, Special Issue “Applicability of New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) to Skin Sensitization: Insights from Industry and Regulatory Perspectives”; Co-editor: Dr. Argel Islas-Robles (IIVS). [https://www.mdpi.com/journal/toxics/special\\_issues/D19D1ZLXJU](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/toxics/special_issues/D19D1ZLXJU). Submissions deadline: 30 June 2026.

**G-Emilia Costin** is an Editorial Board Member for the *Cutaneous and Ocular Toxicology Journal*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/icot20/about-this-journal#journal-metrics>

**Laura C. Markley** earned Diplomate of the American Board of Toxicology (DABT).

**Nicole S. Olgun** earned Diplomate of the American Board of Toxicology (DABT).

**Todd Stueckle** is now an Interdisciplinary Research Biologist at Aberdeen Proving Ground after previously being at CDC/NIOSH.