

Out Toxicologists and Allies

Special Interest Group of SOT



SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

Dear OTA Members,

Happy Pride Month! It's my great pleasure as the current President of the Out Toxicologists and Allies SIG to welcome you to our summer '22 newsletter that recaps some of our more recent accomplishments. We held our first ever in person reception at SOT in March where we had the chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones and presented our first ever Postdoctoral Achievement Award (congrats Dr. Lauren Walker!). Our SIG is off to an amazing start, but we're not done yet. Our Executive Board is working hard behind the scenes to draft a proposal to Council to allow preferred pronouns to be displayed on your SOT badge, develop a mentoring award, organize a fall webinar, and much more! Read below for opportunities to get more involved in OTA if you're interested. I hope you all take the time this month to celebrate the progress the LGBT+ community has made and reflect on how much work is left to be done. Stay safe and see you next year in Nashville!



Sincerely,
Sam Snow
President, OTA

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Annual Meeting Recap

The 61st Annual Meeting and ToxExpo was held from March 27-31, 2022 in (mostly) sunny San Diego, California. Our return to in-person programming featured over 70 scientific sessions with over 6,000 attendees. OTA kicked off the specialty section's receptions on Sunday reception at Basic Bar and Pizza, where over 80 attendees enjoyed delicacies and had an opportunity to pick up OTA pins.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our reception sponsors: Gradient and ToxServices. Their generation sponsorship helped make the reception a fantastic success this past SOT Annual Meeting.



OTA Awards First Postdoctoral Achievement Award

At this year's SOT Annual Meeting, OTA awarded the inaugural Postdoctoral Achievement Award to Dr. Lauren Walker (Rutgers University). This award recognizes a SOT postdoctoral trainee who has demonstrated outstanding scientific achievement in toxicology as well as dedicated leadership and professional service. Please check out our Member Spotlight section to learn more about Dr. Walker!

PRIDE Month Celebration

Contributed by Adam Schuller

Harkening back to the Stonewall riots of 1969, we designate June as Pride Month to recognize the importance of these events in the gay liberation movement. In recognition of Pride Month, we will here highlight some LGBTQIA2S+ scientists and public health experts of the past in an effort to increase queer visibility in STEM:



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Alan L. Hart was an American physician who pioneered radiography as a means to detect tuberculosis. He was also one of the first transgender patients to undergo a hysterectomy in the U.S. (which was viewed as a full sex-change at this time in history). Although assigned female at birth, Alan began living life publicly at age 27 as a man. Whenever someone recognized him from his past, he had to relocate and find a new job. Eventually, he married and lived happily with his wife for 37 years. He headed mass X-ray programs in the state of Connecticut, including publishing work on their use as diagnostics for tuberculosis more than 20 years before the public health TB test was introduced. Interestingly, he also began writing novels which included themes of sexuality in medicine. When synthetic hormones became available post-WWII, Alan was able to take advantage of this early hormone replacement therapy to lower his voice and grow facial hair.

Sara Josephine Baker, the first woman to earn a doctorate in public health from NYU, paved a way for women in medicine, an otherwise male-dominated field. She focused her work on the social contexts of disease spread, including health disparities. While this initially resulted in controversy surrounding her work, she continued to perform grassroots public health campaigns in New York slums where she reduced the infant mortality rate 39% in one year. She went on to contribute to work on the typhoid fever outbreak. While not publicly out, Baker lived with her partner and was not secretive about her relationship in her social circle. She also dressed in very tailored clothing which was highly unusual for the time (although it is unclear whether her intention was to more closely resemble the wardrobe of her colleagues or to challenge gender norms).



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There are certainly other historic figures who either could not come out publicly or whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity is only speculated about and therefore not included in this above list. Still, we celebrate the contributions that queer scientists have made in the past and recognize the value that representation has in inspiring future queer youth to pursue STEM careers. Happy Pride!

Subcommittee Updates:

Programming Committee: Planning for SOT 2023 and Beyond!

This committee develops scientific and educational programs consistent with the objectives of OTA, such as webinars, luncheons, and mentoring activities. Our immediate priority has been the review of proposals for the 2023 Annual Meeting Program for sponsorship. We are excited to share with you the great proposals we had the opportunity to review and selected to sponsor.

We are also starting to plan for SOT 2024 in Salt Lake City. If you have any great ideas for scientific programs or professional development sessions you would like to collaborate with OTA on please reach out to OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com. We are also always welcoming of recommended topics for webinars.

Nominating Committee: New Mentoring Award!

OTA is seeking volunteers to facilitate the generation of a Mentoring Award to recognize members of SOT who go above and beyond to support diverse scientists at every career level. If you are interested in being part of this important initiative or if you are interested in nominating someone once the award is established, please reach out to OutToxicologistsAndAllies@gmail.com. Let's work together to foster a positive and inclusive SOT community.

Treasurer's Report

2021 Balance
\$ 5983.43
Incoming
\$2000.00
Expenses
\$2296.64
Current Balance
\$5686.79

Donate to OTA

- SOT has formed many special membership groups, including OTA, designed to connect like-minded toxicologists and help advance research and support in specific aspects of toxicology.
- You can donate to OTA by check or credit card by filling out this [form](#). Your generosity is greatly appreciated and will help fund our Special Interest Group. Thank you for your kind, unrestricted support!

OTA Is Growing: Membership Stats Show International Participation

This year marks another year of growth for OTA as our group now has over 100 members from 3 different countries and 70 unique organizations. Current membership enrollment and participation numbers are summarized in the infographic below.

Keep In Touch: Send Your News to OTA Leadership for Distribution

Were you or your lab recently highlighted or recognized? Want to share information of interest with fellow OTA members? We want to highlight news and updates from our membership in the OTA website's [News and Media](#) section. Please send your updates to (insert contact information).



Member Spotlight

Contributed by Lauren Walker

We are delighted that **Dr. Lauren Walker** was willing to share a bit about her background and what receiving the inaugural OTA Postdoctoral Achievement Award means to her.



Dr. Walker's postdoctoral research focuses on placental macrophages as potential targets of environmental chemicals. Specifically, her postdoctoral research is focused on studying how environmental chemical exposure alters placental macrophage phenotype and ability to mount an antimicrobial response. Placental macrophages are fetal-derived cells that play key roles in placental morphogenesis, homeostasis, and infection response. As communities of color are disproportionately impacted by environmental toxicant exposures, she intends for her research to also bring light to previously unexplored potential causes of developmental and reproductive health disparities.

In addition to serving her community through research, Dr. Walker has served in 5 SOT leadership positions since graduate school. Outside of SOT, she also currently serves as the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Vice-Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and Early Career member of the Leadership Development Committee. In these roles, she developed professional development training materials for undergraduate and graduate students, served as a panelist on a student fellowship grant writing workshop, compiled virtual trainee resource materials in response to campus shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and successfully prepared a session on effective stakeholder engagement for the 2022 SOT Annual Meeting.

The intention of the monetary award is for the recipient to use the funds to support future education and/or research-related expenses. When asked how she will use the award funds, Dr. Walker said that she intended to use the funds to support her enrollment in an upcoming American College of Toxicology (ACT) course. "I'm keen to learn more about applied toxicology," Dr. Walker said. She plans to enroll in a course focused on practical applications of toxicology in drug development and/or regulatory applications.

Officer Updates

Outgoing Officers

Thank you for the great work our outgoing officers have done for our group and community. As they excelled in their professional endeavors, they also served as leaders in OTA. Although we are sad to see them leave the OTA Executive Board we are all excited for their continued success!

Let's send a huge OTA thank you to Martin (OTA's first president!!!), Tyler (OTA Councilor), and Megumi (OTA Graduate Student Rep) for all of their great work.



Please join us in welcoming our incoming officers for 2022

- **Dr. Jess Plavicki (she/her) is our new Vice President-Elect.** Dr. Plavicki is the Manning Assistant Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (PLM) at Brown University, where her lab uses the zebrafish model to study how toxicant exposures and genetic mutations disrupt the development of the brain and cardiovascular system. She runs a summer science internship program for Providence youth from historically marginalized communities. She is an avid flower and vegetable gardener who likes to make thematic gardens with her sons.
- **We welcome back Dr. Sarah Lacher (she/her) as Secretary/Treasurer.** Dr. Lacher is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Minnesota Medical School, where her research focuses on characterizing cell-type specific patterns of gene regulation following exposure to various inducers of stress. She loves to garden and dreams of owning a chili nursery in New Mexico someday.
- **Tom Lewandowski, PhD, DABT, ERT (he/him) is the new OTA Councilor.** Tom Lewandowski (he/him) is a toxicologist and chemist working in Gradient's Seattle office. He works primarily in the area of product safety, helping companies understand product risk and develop safer and more sustainable products. He currently lectures on metals toxicology and risk assessment at the University of Washington School of Public Health. He has also taught at NATO- and SOT-sponsored events in Bulgaria and Romania. Outside of toxicology he spends time doing pottery, finding unusual ferns to add to his garden, and reading books about world history.
- **Elvis Ticiani, PhD (he/him) has joined the OTA leadership team as the new Postdoctoral Representative.** Dr. Ticiani is a postdoctoral research fellow in the department of Pathology at University of Illinois at Chicago, his research focuses on reproductive toxicology and aims to understand how environmental exposures to endocrine disrupting chemicals during prenatal life can induce adaptive maternal and fetal mechanisms in humans, leading up to pathophysiological consequences during postnatal life. He can't start his day if he doesn't have six eggs for breakfast.
- **Joanna Woo, BS (they/their) is the new Graduate Student Representative.** Joanna Woo is a PhD candidate in the Joint Graduate Program in Toxicology at Rutgers University, dedicating their research and studies into identifying mechanistic targets linking obesity and asthma through cytokine mediation. They have a passion for reactions and love to watch scary movies with friends. They spend their free time watching cute animal videos (their latest obsession is seals).

Stay healthy and safe,

The OTA Executive Board

Samantha Snow, President

Troy A. Roepke, Vice President

Jess Plavicki, Vice President-Elect

Sarah Lacher, Secretary-Treasurer

Daniella Pizzurro, Past President

Phillip Wages, Senior Councilor

Tom Lewandowski, Junior Councilor

Elvis Ticiani, Postdoctoral Representative

Joanna Woo, Graduate Student Representative



toxicology.org/groups/sig/ota



sothq@toxicology.org



[703.438.3115](tel:703.438.3115)



[11190 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 300
Reston, VA 20191-4375](#)