

THE ARTTIFACT

news from the center of excellence

Postdoctoral Researcher of the Year

BIG ACHIEVEMENTS FOR A MAN FROM LITTLE CHUTE, WISCONSIN

This past month, Dr. Michael Wedemeyer was chosen as the 2023 Postdoctoral Research Fellow of the Year. He started his position as a NIDA T32 postdoc at UTHSCSA at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in July of 2020 when he joined the lab of Drs. William Clarke and Kelly Berg. With an educational background in engineering, once appointed, he transitioned from biochemistry to pharmacology. Michael describes himself and other postdocs as “gray-collars” who sit at the intersection of labor and management. “Postdoctoral researchers are the peripheral nervous system of academic research,” he says, “as we collect data (sensory neurons), foster communication (synapse), and put plans to action (motor neurons) in the lab.”

His primary goal as a postdoctoral fellow was to establish himself in the field of pharmacology by publishing journal articles and building a network through conference presentations. Michael has exceeded his goals with 11 publications since 2016, 4 oral, and 11 poster presentations (including 1 travel award and 2 poster awards). His publications have impacted the fields of biomolecular modeling, chemokine-receptor interactions, and substance use disorder research.

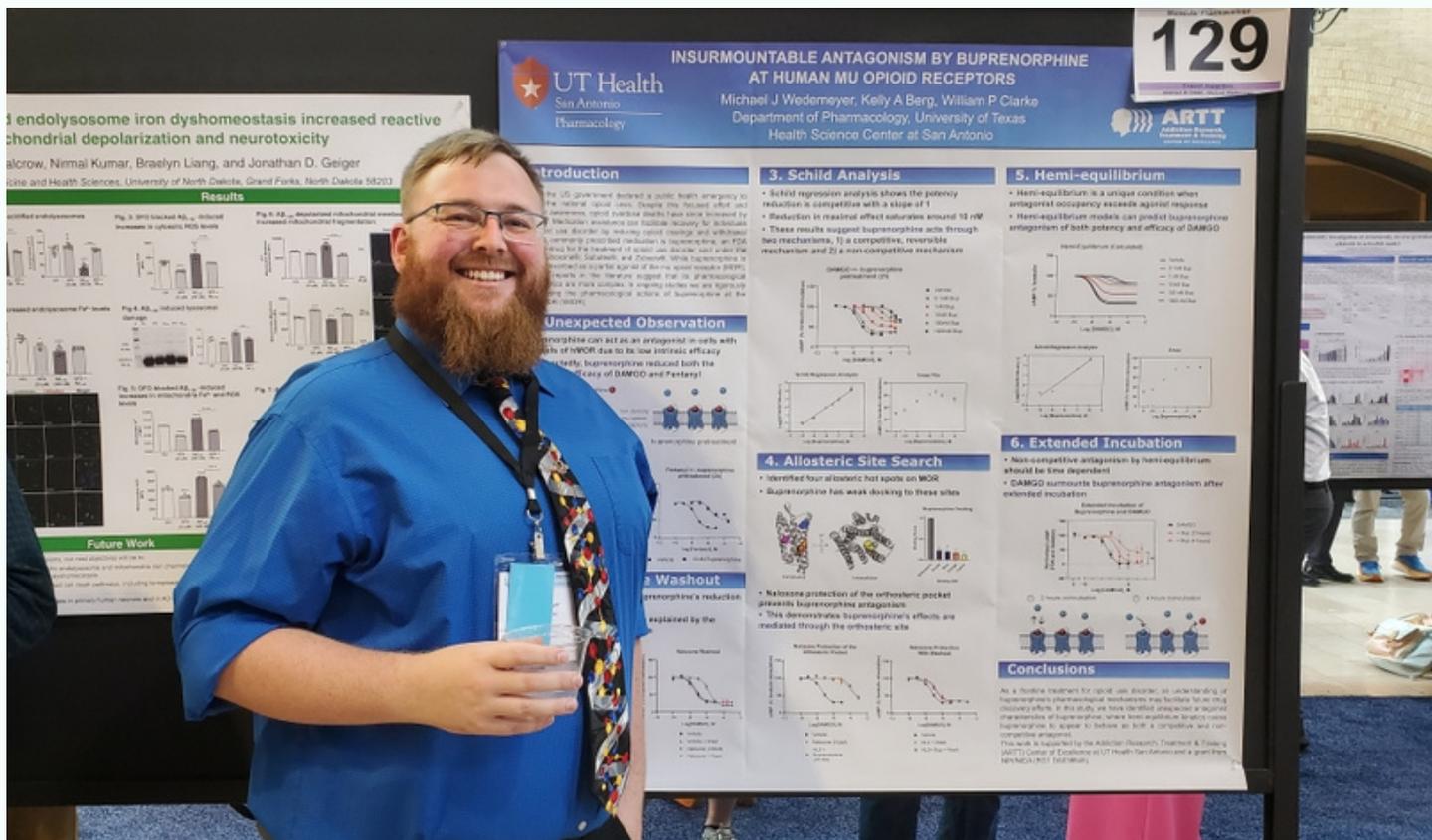


Michael's most recent publications:

BERG ET AL.

HAYER ET AL.

WEDEMEYER ET AL.



Come see the poster Michael displayed at the 2023 ASPET conference in St. Louis on the bulletin board outside of MED240B

Despite staying busy with his research, Michael is also very passionate about mentoring and educating the next bright minds in pharmacology and biomedical research. Dr. William Clarke describes Michael as pleasant, hard-working, and an independent person. "He is a team player and his enthusiasm for science and problem solving positively influences everyone in the lab." In regards to Michael's goal of positively affecting the next generation of scientists, Dr. Clarke says that Michael is "instilling in these young people the excitement and rewarding aspects of participating in scientific discovery." Michael's wife, Sarah, who's currently a part of the South Texas Medical Scientist Training Program, says, "I don't want to be cheesy, but I'm very proud of him and he inspires me to be a better scientist."

Michael is currently supported by an F32 fellowship and he plans to start his own lab studying the structure and function of G-protein coupled receptors in human health and disease. He hopes to teach his own students three rules:

Rule #1 - Nobody knows anything. Your PI, chairs, deans, and certainly my paper reviewers are not omnipotent beings. They are just trying their best. And so am I and so are you. And that's OK.

Rule #2 - Inertia is real. Inertia says an external force is required for change. If you see a problem, it will remain a problem until you act upon it. Be the change you want to see in the world. Reach out to find additional mentors, talk to someone who does a technique you want to do (many people here are very nice), and start that postdoctoral social hour you've always wanted.

Rule #3 - Keep on keepin' on. You never give up on your goals, that's my philosophy. A wise man once told me, the world belongs to those of us who are stubborn.

NEW ARRIVALS

A chat with the newest T32 Postdoctoral Fellow



Lindsey Galbo-Thomma completed her first day at UTHSCSA on August 21st after completing her PhD at Wake Forest University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. Dr. Galbo-Thomma has over 10 years of preclinical academic and industry research experience and is passionate about behavioral pharmacology and investigating substance use disorders. "I'm very excited to be surrounded and mentored by so many incredible scientists throughout this fellowship," she says. "I'm confident the training I'll receive from them, and the training opportunities available to me as a T32 fellow will prepare me for an independent career."

3 Facts about Lindsey:

I love live music—you can find me at the nearest Phish or Billy Strings concert

One of my favorite ways to relax is by cooking and trying new recipes

I'm a science and drug policy advocate and was selected as the 2023-2024 ACNP/AMP BRAD Fellow where I will focus on animal research advocacy and outreach

The week before her training began, she and her husband made the long trek from North Carolina to Texas over two days in a car with two cats and two dogs, one of which was a 6-month-old coonhound puppy! As for what she's most looking forward to, "I love to cook and try new foods, so I'm very excited to explore the food scene in San Antonio, especially those from other cultures," Lindsey says. She and her husband have also brought their converted camper van and are excited for the weather to cool down so that they can explore the Texas Hill Country!

[VIEW LINDSEY'S BIO](#)

On the hunt for postdocs

HELP US FIND OUR NEXT FELLOW

Do you have someone in mind who you think would be a great fit for our T32 postdoctoral fellowship? Do you know someone who knows someone? Send them our way! You could be the direct link to finding our next fellow. Reminder that fellows must be a US citizen, noncitizen national, or permanent resident.

[CLICK HERE TO
DOWNLOAD OUR FLYER](#)

This Must Be the Place

INSIDE THE BOOTH AT AUSTIN CITY LIMITS FESTIVAL

The annual Austin City Limits Festival, known for its iconic performances and vibrant music scene, saw a unique and inspiring addition this year with the nonprofit organization This Must Be the Place. In between a bar and the medical tent, surrounded by clouds of dirt and grass, was a lone booth with a banner advertising “Free Naloxone: Overdose Prevention and Education”. Eclectically clad festivalgoers were attracted for a variety of reasons, some spotting the word “free” and wanting to find out what they could get their hands on, while others knew exactly what was being handed out and were willing to stand in long lines to receive some. Many explanations were given as to why each person wanted to learn about what’s commonly known as the brand name Narcan. Analisa Tapia, ARTT program coordinator, who volunteered during weekend two, shared, “It opened my eyes that so many people were willing to tell us their first or secondhand experiences with overdose. We gave out naloxone to the event medical team, doctors, bartenders, nurses, flight attendants, teachers, recovery center workers, and parents who want to keep their kids safe. Even as the weekend went on, people who had previously passed by the booth came back and said that incidents they had seen happen on earlier days made them want to be prepared if it happened again.”



Predoctoral T32 recipient Olivia Yang, pictured above, says, “Volunteering for Be the Place was an amazing experience. I was touched by the amount of people that were excited to learn more about naloxone and how to use it to help others. It was reassuring to know that even faced with this opioid epidemic, there are so many people who genuinely want to address the ongoing crisis.”

The Ohio-based organization is run by William Perry, a recovery counselor, and Ingela Travers-Hayward, an Emmy Award-winning producer. Dr. Lindsey Galbo-Thomma learned of the group through another harm reduction organization and spread the word to the UTHSCSA team. "I was interested in volunteering, so I met with Perry on Zoom, and we clicked right away, spending over an hour talking about harm reduction and the importance of outreach and education." Perry and Ingela live out of suitcases as they travel the country, going from festival to festival. In 2023, they attended 23 festivals, with ACL being their last stop, and they're currently in negotiations to attend even more festivals in 2024. The goal of the organization is to destigmatize carrying naloxone and equip more people with the knowledge and confidence to use it when the situation arises. "I think that people in general are realizing that supplying Narcan doesn't mean anything other than you want to save human lives," Travis County Judge Andy Brown told KXAN newsgroup. A total of 6,000 naloxone kits were handed out during weekends one and two of ACL, equating to over \$100,000 worth of donated Narcan.



The duo is staying in Austin until early November and is preparing to meet with Texas government officials to share their experiences and advice on how to allocate funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration to effectively combat the current fentanyl overdose crisis.

Contact their team if you or someone you know would like to volunteer during their next festival tour

[BETHEPLACE.ORG](https://www.betheplace.org)

SUPPORT THEIR MISSION:
WAYS TO DONATE

San Antonio Area Harm Reduction Organizations:

- **Bexar Area Harm Reduction Coalition** - The first legal needle exchange in the state of Texas
- **Corazon SA** - Providing guidance into pathways of recovery through peer support and recovery specialists

IS OCT3 THE KEY?

Nikki Clauss' most recent publication

Over the summer, former T32 fellow Nikki Clauss was published in *Molecular Psychiatry*. Her publication is titled, "Ethanol inhibits dopamine uptake via organic cation transporter 3: Implications for ethanol and cocaine co-abuse." Nikki completed her T32 training under the mentorship of Dr. Lynette C Daws earlier this year. Dr. Clauss is currently working on projects assessing the role of organic cation transporter 3 (OCT3) in stress-related neuropsychiatric and substance use disorders. She is particularly interested in the long-term consequences of early-life adversity. As such, Dr. Clauss is developing projects to explore a potential role for OCT3 in the association between early life adversity and substance use disorders.



[VIEW NIKKI'S PUBLICATION](#)

BBC Conference 2024

SAVE THE DATE MARCH 22-24

Mark your calendar to join us for the BBC opening reception on the evening of Friday, March 22nd, at the Embassy Landmark San Antonio, followed by the two-day conference on the 23rd and 24th. Travel award and abstract submission deadlines can be found on the home page of the BBC website. Details on speakers and registration are coming soon!

[BBC WEBSITE](#)

SCIENCE MATTERS
Accelerating Implementation of
Evidence-Based Practices



FEBRUARY 29 - MARCH 1, 2024
DOUBLE TREE HOTEL
AUSTIN, TX

[TXSUS WEBSITE](#)

TXSUS Save the Date

The 2024 Texas Substance Use Symposium, or TxSUS (pronounced "Texas") will be held in person and virtually on February 29-March 1, 2024 at the Double Tree Hotel in Austin, Texas. There will be ample learning opportunities and engaging discussions, all centered around the theme, Science Matters: Accelerating Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices. TxSUS features FREE continuing education curriculum, panel discussions, and networking with national and Texas-based substance use disorder experts.

Faculty Spotlight

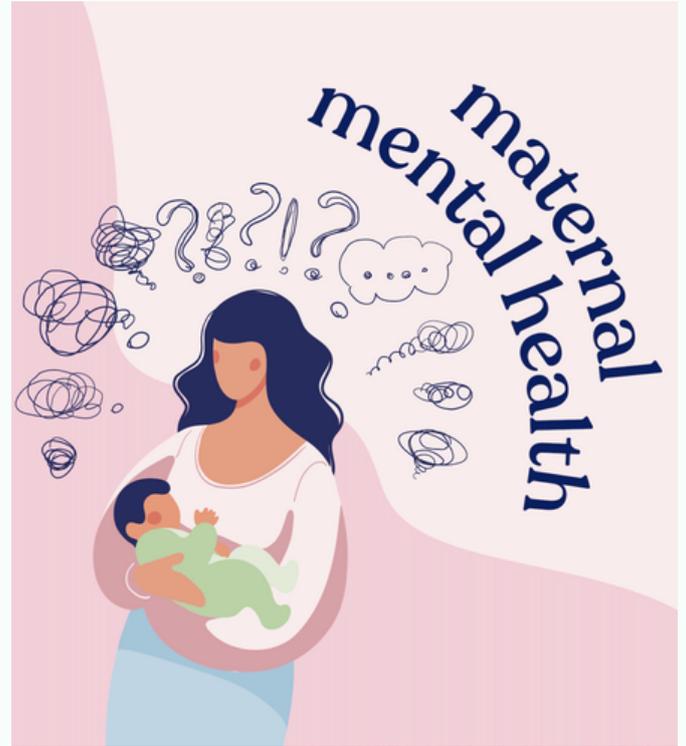


DR. BRETT GINSBURG

Dr. Ginsburg, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, recently talked to public radio's Texas Standard about whether Delta-8 THC, a psychoactive substance produced by cannabis plants, is safe.

"As other states have moved toward legalizing recreational marijuana, Texas remains a holdout. But is the Lone Star State as careful as it ought to be when it comes to other cannabis products?"

FULL RECORDED INTERVIEW
AND TRANSCRIPT



DR. LISA CLEVELAND

Earlier this year, it was announced that the Department of Health and Human Services awarded more than \$65 million to address the maternal health crisis and invest in new approaches to care. The Health Resources and Services Administration not only offers a 24/7 maternal mental health hotline, but also provides training for OB/GYNs, certified nurse midwives, and other maternal care providers to get real-time support from mental health experts in managing their maternal mental health and substance use disorder cases.

Dr. Lisa Cleveland has been appointed to the HHS Maternal Mental Health Taskforce - Advisory Committee for Women's Services.



Data Blitz Success

NEWEST EVENT

On every 4th Tuesday of the month, faculty, mentors, fellows, lab members, and anyone else interested in substance use disorder research is invited to attend the Data Blitz. It's an informal opportunity to share data and receive real-time feedback over adult drinks and snacks. Thank you to our T32 fellows for kicking off the event and to our attendees for being actively engaged!

[ADD ME TO THE INVITE LIST](#)



Chalk Talk

LET'S TALK IT OUT

Please continue to encourage your postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and other young professionals to attend Chalk Talks every 2nd Tuesday of the month. If you have someone that you would like added to the invitation list, please send a message through the link below.

[CHALK TALK INVITE](#)

Do you have something exciting that you'd like to share or advertise?

Click the button below or visit the ARTT website to submit a story and be featured in the next ARTTIFACT!

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Thank you to Julia Taylor for proofreading