



BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION
of Northwest Louisiana

1505 Kings Highway
Shreveport, LA 71103

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Post Office Box 38050
Shreveport, LA 71133-8050

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Tele (318) 675-4100
Fax (318) 675-4120

CONTACT: Jay Meyers, Biomedical Research Foundation
Office: 318-675-4108
Cell: 318-455-9971

www.biomed.org

**FIVE LOCAL STUDENTS SELECTED AS SEMIFINALISTS IN
NATION'S TOP HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE COMPETITION**

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**4 of 5 participate in the Science and Medicine Academic Research Training
(SMART) program**

SHREVEPORT, LA – Five local high school students were selected as semifinalists in the 2007-08 Siemens Foundation Competition in Math, Science and Technology (<http://www.siemens-foundation.org/en/>). This year 1,641 students from 34 states competed in the competition. The five local students made it to the final 295. Louisiana placed six students in the semifinals and five were from Shreveport-Bossier.

The five students are Niharika Jain, Caddo Magnet High School; Dallas Kentzel, Airline High School; Seema Kumar, Caddo Magnet High School; Alexander Mijalis, Caddo Magnet High School and Stephen Xue, Caddo Magnet High School. All except Xue participate in the Science and Medicine Academic Research (SMART) Program which is sponsored by the Biomedical Research Foundation. The SMART program pairs up top local high school senior science students with faculty at LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport (LSUHSC-S) for a one year research mentorship. Sassy Williams, SMART Program Coordinator outlined, “The purpose of the program is for students to participate in biomedical research with world-class research teams at LSUHSC-S. In addition, our desire is to build the local biotechnology workforce.”

“These students have distinguished themselves at a high level and we applaud them and their LSUHSC-S mentors for their efforts” noted Biomedical Research Foundation President and CEO Jack Sharp.

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The four SMART student's projects and their LSUHSC-S mentors are as follows.

- Niharika Jain -- LSUHSC-S mentor Mary Lowery Nordberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor. Jain's project was *Polymorphisms in Cytochrome P450 2C9 (CYP2C9) and Vitamin K Epoxide Reductase Complex Subunit 1 (VKORC1) Impact Warfarin Therapy: A Clinical Pharmacogenomics Model*. Jain's project focused on Warfarin, the most commonly used anticoagulant in the world, which has been associated with fatal or major bleeding in seven percent of patients. The study aims to determine the value of genotyping patients to assess predisposition to bleeding when taking Warfarin.
- Dallas Krentzel -- LSUHSC-S mentor Tammy Dugas, Ph.D., Associate Professor. Dallas project was "*Is 4,4'-Methylenedianiline –induced vascular toxicity a model for pulmonary hypertension?*" Dallas's project focused on the effects of polyurethane materials that surround us and how it may be a factor in pulmonary hypertension.
- Seema Kumar -- LSUHSC-S mentor Chantal A. Rivera, Ph. D., Assistant Professor. Seema's project was *The Extent of Sildenafil Citrate (Viagra) Related Hepatic Damage with Non-Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus*. This project evaluated the potential detrimental effects of Sildenafil on the liver in an obese setting.
- Alexander Mijalis – LSUHSC-S mentor Chris Kevil, Ph.D., Associate Professor. Alexander's project was *Caveolin-1 regulation of endothelial cell activation and its implications in Inflammatory Bowel Disease*. The purpose of this project was to identify important regulators of vascular inflammation during inflammatory bowel disease.

The Biomedical Research Foundation helped to establish, and coordinates and raises funds to operate the SMART Program. Ninety-eight students have participated in the SMART program which is in its 10th year. Over 90% of SMART students continue their education as science majors at colleges or universities nationwide.

This year's SMART program sponsors include Mrs. Bobbie Cate Hicks, Chase Bank, Magale Foundation and Mrs. Billie Corley.

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