

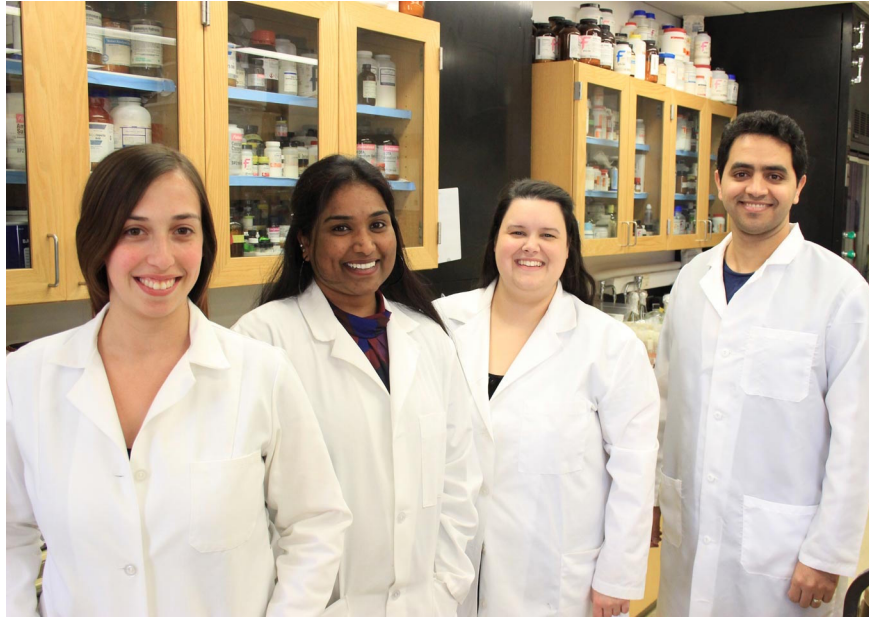
Tuesday, Oct 18, 2016

OU graduate students receive top four prizes at the 7th annual MINS conference

Oakland University graduate students earned the top four prizes at the **7th Annual Minimally Invasive Neurosurgical Society (MINS) Conference** for their work with stem cells and regenerative medicine.

The conference was held on Mackinac Island and focused on innovative surgical techniques and therapies. The conference was attended by neurosurgeons and scientists, providing a unique opportunity to present and discuss latest treatment and research discoveries.

Four of the OU graduate students from **Dr. Rasul Chaudhry's** lab in the **Department of Biological Sciences** and OUWB-ISCRM presented their research findings. This research has been done in collaboration with **Dr. Mick Perez-Cruet**, at Beaumont Hospital.



From left, Christina Brown, Naimisha Beeravolu, Christina McKee and Ali Alamri had their work highlighted at the 7th annual MINS conference.



Naimisha Beeravolu, left and Christina McKee at work in the lab

Naimisha Beeravolu received the first prize of \$500 for her work presented on, “Therapeutic feasibility and potential of human umbilical MSCs and derivatives for regeneration of intervertebral disc.” Her studies showed that transplanted human cells promoted regeneration of nucleus pulposus, a jelly-like material that provides lumbar spine support, flexibility and has shock-absorbing capacity.

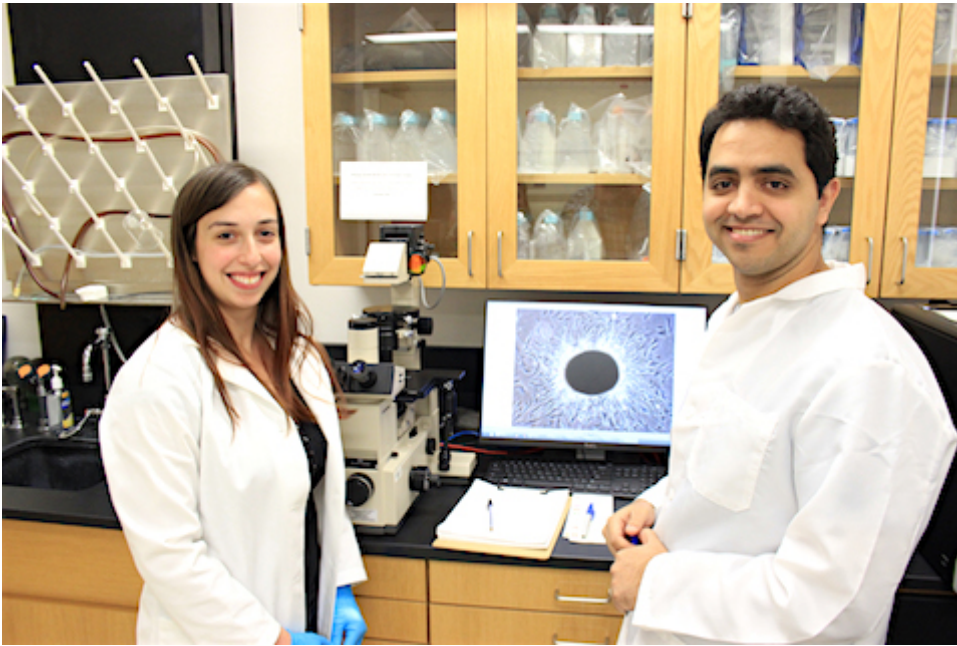
Christina McKee was awarded \$300 for second place for her work entitled, “Differentiation of umbilical cord mesenchymal stem cells into expressing nucleus pulposus markers.” Her research utilizes three-dimensional self-assembling scaffolds to promote differentiation in transplanted cells in an *ex vivo* culture system that mimic *in vivo* intervertebral disc.

“The research findings by both Naimisha and Christina McKee could lead to developing cell based therapies for degenerative disc disease the most common cause of lower back pain,” said Dr. Chaudhry.

Christina Brown received the third place award of \$200 for her presentation entitled, “Differentiation of perinatal mesenchymal stem cells into neural derivatives.”

Ali Alamri earned the fourth place award of \$100 for his presentation on, “Neural repair with stem cells.” He reported his work on the ability of mesenchymal stem cells and their neural derivatives to repair damaged retina.

“The results of Ali’s investigation could provide basis for translational studies to treat macular degeneration and restore vision someday,” added Dr. Chaudhry. “Overall, it was a very successful conference and provided a great opportunity for the students to network and present their research findings to the esteemed surgeons and scientists in attendance.”



Christina Brown and Ali Alamri use the light microscope to track the progress of their work