

This issue begins with prayers for them who have lost their lives fighting the virus; for them who were infected, probably infected a second time, but have won the battle; for them who have lost their occupations and living; for them who have sustained with less; for them who have braved it all for serving others; for them who have found ways of emerging from the dust; for all the unsung heroes who have touched lives. A big salute to humanity in times of peril.

Covid is an enigma and as you know more about it, you still know less. Life has become unpredictable. You wonder whether you should just throw away all caution or tread with caution. It is amazing to see how many theories have come by as all await the success of the Vaccines, a ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

Every cloud has a silver lining and the silver lining is due to the hard work, impassioned drive to find a cure and prevention of the disease. This silver lining has contributions of several of our alumni, which is an inspiration and an undefined strength for all of us.

As a whatsapp message popped up: "Hetero to manufacture 100 million doses of Sputnik V for India" with a personal message saying, "Mera career ka first vaccine project". The excitement was evident, the responsibility he was given was evident. He was reading the technology then and now onto QC of the vaccine, the clinical trials of which will be done by Dr. Reddy's.

"He" is Pradeep Iyer, who has led several successful projects at Hetero HealthCare Ltd, Hyderabad. Pradeep graduated in 2004 as a student of Biochemistry with Vocational Biotechnology, moving on to do his post graduate studies (2004 - 2006) in Biotechnology from SRM Institute, Chennai. His first experience in the Pharma Industry began at INTAS, Ahmedabad and was with the Analytical Division in the Research and Development. He moved to Hetero in 2009 and his journey there has been amazing, as he has been instrumental in launching products like Darbopoetin, Rifuximab, Bevacizumab, Adalimumab. A career carved out in Biologics.

Pradeep, probably considered himself a Black Swan, but the glint in his eyes, the energy, the uninhibited laughter, the meeting of deadlines breezing through fun times in college were speaking of a potential that would one day shine bright, and truly so, for he is now a part of the ray of light at the end of the tunnel, a part of the silver lining that speaks of commitment, hardwork and an immense joy in his work.

The department congratulates Pradeep and wishes him the best for all his future endeavours. He makes us look good and we are proud to have him as our Alumni. His contribution to Science and Society is exemplary!



Alumni Shine



Darshit Thakkar, who graduated in 2018, completed his Post graduate course in Neuroscience from National Brain Research Centre, has now joined a Project at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.



Hrimkar Buch, who graduated in 2018, completed his Post graduation from Nirma University, cleared the DBT BET exam, waded through several interviews to have been successfully selected as a PhD Scholar at JNCSAR, Bangalore.

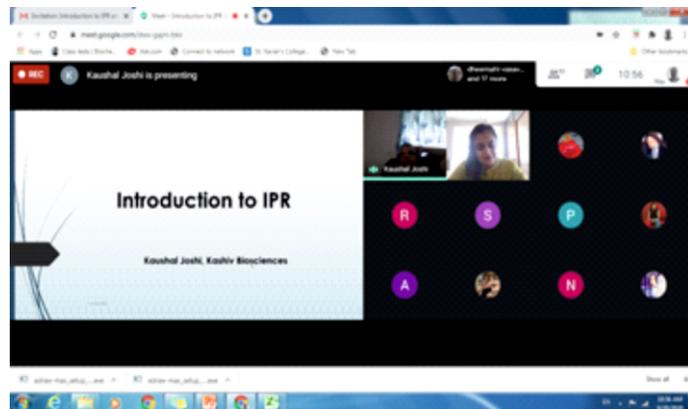


Shashwat Goswami, who also graduated in 2018, completed his Post graduation from Nirma University, cleared the NET exam, and having knocked at the doors of IISER, Pune has now been allowed in to pursue his PhD.

Theirs is a journey of immense reading and discussing Science, perseverance, patience, hope and belief in oneself. As they begin their journey towards their Doctoral degree, they have paved a way lit with inspiration.

An Insight into IPR and Patents

The department organized a two day Webinar on Introduction to Intellectual Property Rights and Basics of Patenting. Mr. Kaushal Joshi, an experienced Patent Professional with more than 14 years' experience of handling IP matters related to Biologics and Pharmaceutical Products and working as Director at Kashiv Biosciences Pvt Ltd kept everyone hooked onto the subject by explaining the terms and issues related to Patenting by giving simple examples. He also guided the students on the prospects of a career in IPR and Patenting. His demeanour and passion for the subject was something that endeared him to many of our students.



β Helix Colloquia

A talk on the current scenario of 'Repurposed Drugs and Vaccines for Covid' was presented by Nisarg Patil on 19 December 2020. His detailing on mechanism of action of the drugs, the basic principles of Vaccine Development across the world, the data of the clinical trials, the data giving a promise of the Vaccines being successful was immaculate and clear. The talk also showcased the silver lining beyond the looming Clouds of Covid.

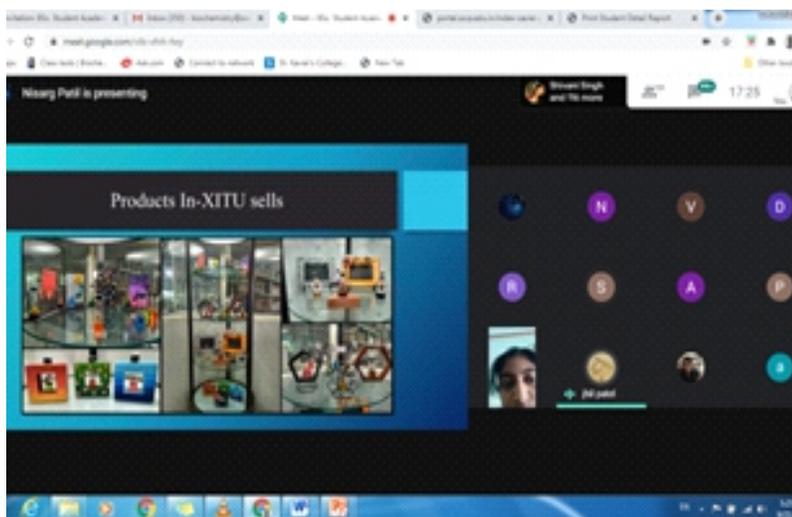
Online Route for the Department – A new way

An article in Nature, “Science – ing from home”, was as perplexing a title as it really has been. The pandemic saw all research labs, educational institutions closing down with laboratory sessions and research too becoming virtual. Teaching and learning has happened, completely online, including labs becoming virtual. That is not done, one would say. How can science be learnt without labs? However, what rises above everything is that something is better than nothing.

All faculty have learnt and adopted to the new way of teaching – learning through the Learning Management System of the college. Hours of preparation and focus go into one video lecture and that with the hope that learning will happen. Days and nights have merged into one, but learning has happened. Two Youtube channels – Biovivacious and Biochaperone too have been created to facilitate learning and contribute to Education. Moreover, most of the faculty members (Sebastian Vadakan, Shital Doshi, Yogesh Baravalia, Priya Vijayan, Srishti Chabaria) have also updated themselves by enrolling for online courses and attending webinars.

It has not been easy for the students, however, they always have risen beyond expectations, and have adapted to the new way of sharing knowledge. With internet irregularities, continuous evaluation system, few interactive sessions, studying has been challenging. Many of them have taken up extra online classes along with the regular online studies. Many of them have attended webinars and workshops online.

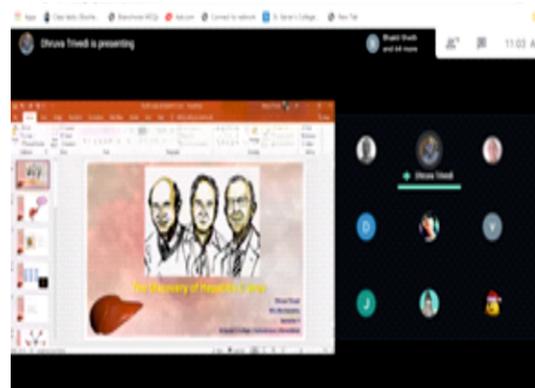
Seniors also conducted an Online Orientation Programme for the Freshers. It was good to see that some fun activities were part of the Orientation. The freshers were familiarized with systems in the department and college.



Students' Pursuits

About 32 of our students cleared a Language Proficiency Test conducted by IISER, NCCS and DBT as part of a Two Day Webinar on "How to Read Scientific Literature?" conducted on 29 September, 2020.

Ayushi Pareek participated in an online National level competition organized by PS Science College and HVHP Institute, Kadi under the aegis of Microbiology Society of India, on October 16, 2020.



Usma Saiyed attended a Workshop on SPSS - Diagnostic and remedial measures for common errors in application of statistics, organized by Dept of Statistics, College of agriculture, Navsari Agriculture University on October 20-21, 2020

Two talks on 12 October 2020, by two of our MSc Biochemistry students on work of the Nobel Laureates of 2020 was not only as a recognition of the enormous contribution by the scientists but also as an intellectually stimulating session. Ms. Dhruva Trivedi presented on the work of Nobel Prize winners of Physiology and Medicine and Nisarg Patil enthralled all with his presentation on CRISPR Technology, the pioneering work of the Nobel Prize winners of Chemistry. The talks were attended by 92 participants. A students' initiative that sowed the seeds of a Biochemistry – Biotechnology Students' Club.

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