On June 5, 2015, the Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (SWCOEH), Pilot Projects Research Training Program (PPRTP) hosted the 16th annual Pilot Projects Research Symposium.

This year’s symposium took place at The University of Texas School of Public Health campus in Houston, Texas. Over 45 in attendance participated in the symposium, which included a keynote address by Mr. James Shelton, MS, of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Houston North Area Office. Mr. Shelton’s keynote address entitled “OSHA Outreach to the Oil and Gas Industry: Opportunities and Challenges of Injury and Illness Data and Research” provided attendees with a unique view of OSHA’s data collection operations.

The remaining symposium featured six investigators who received research awards from the PPRTP last year. These investigators represent institutions in Public Health Region (PHR) 6. This year’s awardees and research projects included the following:

- Qingsheng “Sam” Wang, PhD, Oklahoma State University: “Evacuation Simulations of Confined Spaces in Petrochemical Facilities”
- Brennan Thompson, PhD, Texas Tech University: “Effects of Demanding Work Schedule Characteristics on Fatigue and Performance Capacities in Female Healthcare Workers: Injury Risk Profiling Assessment”
- Astrid Engel, PhD, Tulane University: “Mutagenic Effects of Oil Spill Chemicals on Human Airway Epithelial Cells:
- Edward Brooks, MD, UTHSC-San Antonio: “Calcium Channel Activation by Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons”
- Kai Zhang, PhD, The University of Texas School of Public Health, “Heat and Health: Developing Heat Vulnerability Indicators for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in California as a Prototype for Texas”
- Sadie Conway, PhD, The University of Texas School of Public Health: “Health Effects of Long Working Hours”

The PPRTP enhances SWCOEH regional outreach efforts in research training and fosters stronger inter-institutional ties in occupational health research within PHR 6 (Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas and New Mexico). The objective of this program is to provide a support mechanism for pilot research projects initiated by junior faculty, graduate research trainees and faculty in order to begin or enhance research agendas in occupational health and safety. More information about the SWCOEH PPRTP can be found at https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/swcoeh/pilot-projects/.